March

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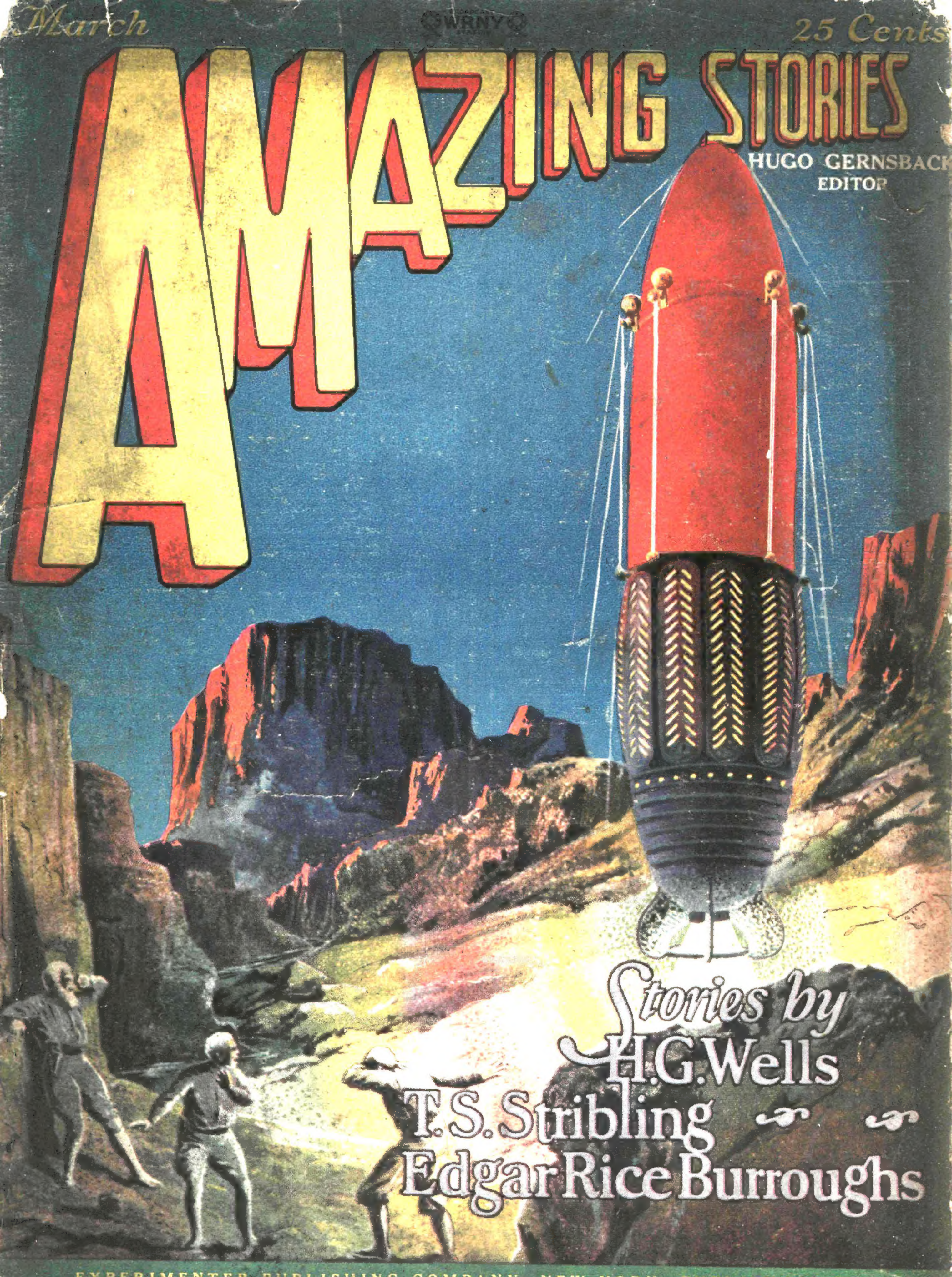
AMAZING STORIES

HUGO GERNSBACK
EDITOR



Stories by
H. G. Wells
T. S. Stribling
Edgar Rice Burroughs

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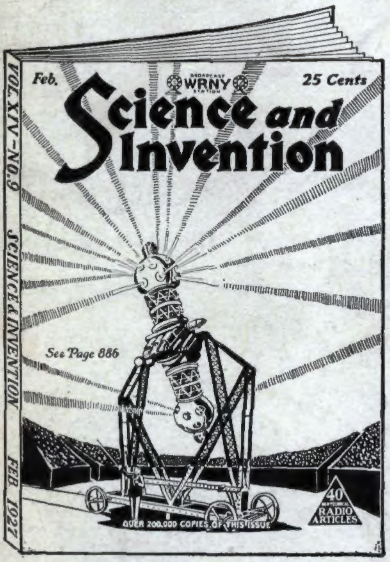
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Feb. 1927
See Page 886
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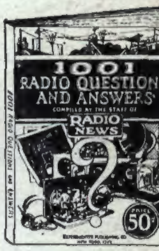
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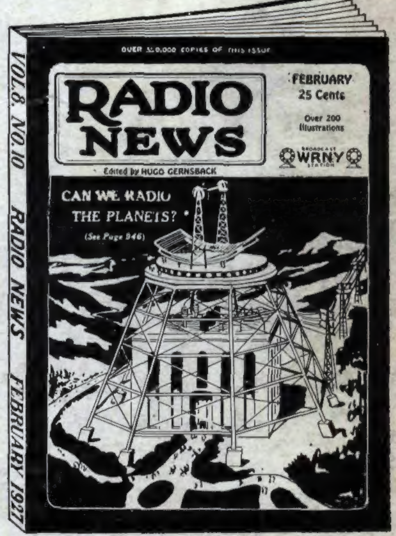
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Radio News
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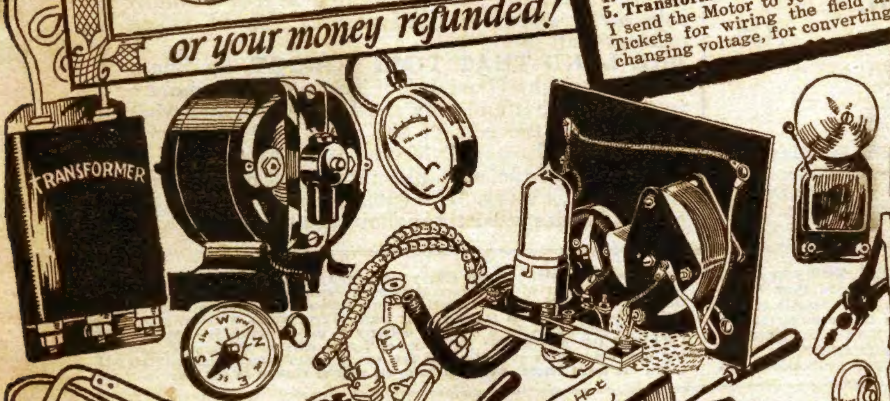

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AMAZING STORIES

Vol. 1 No. 12
March, 1927

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By A. Merritt 1130

The Land That Time Forgot
(A Serial in 3 parts) Part II.
By Edgar Rice Burroughs 1138

Our Cover

this month illustrates a scene from The Green Splotches, by T. S. Stribling, where we see the great interplanetarian flyer after it has taken off from the earth. It has just risen and is gaining momentum with each fraction of a second.

In Our Next Issue:

THE PLAGUE OF THE LIVING DEAD, by A. Hyatt Verrill. The author of "Beyond the Pole" and "The Man Who Could Vanish" has written a most remarkable tale which comes pretty close to straining your credulity, but at the same time you will say to yourself over and over that there is nothing impossible about it. Immortality IS possible, as recent researches at the Rockefeller Institute have indicated; that is, animal tissue can be kept alive indefinitely. You will be thrilled by Mr. Verrill's story.

WHITE GOLD PIRATE, by Merlin Moore Taylor. An absorbing detective story about a daring criminal who baffles many authorities interested in the mysterious disappearance of enormous quantities of platinum. A scientific detective uses the X-ray, finger prints and the phonograph in a particularly interesting manner, making this a most plausible story with a true scientific aspect.

HICK'S INVENTIONS WITH A KICK, by Henry Hugh Simons, in which an entirely new thing in dining tables and service is promulgated. Naturally, being a new invention, mishaps occur, but that only adds to the fun for the reader. A very interesting idea, well told.

THE BALLOON HOAX, by Edgar Allan Poe. Although balloons have long since been a reality, we cannot fail to be impressed by the scope of the author's scientifiction knowledge and prophetic vision. Also, the story is written in Poe's inimitable style, which in itself assures you of fifteen minutes well spent.

THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, by Edgar Rice Burroughs (Part III). Those of you who are wondering what and why the Wieroo are and what happened to the rest of the party that landed on Caspak with Bowen Tyler and Lys LaRue will find the answer in the next five thrilling chapters, which conclude this story. The same pitch of exciting interest is maintained throughout the story.

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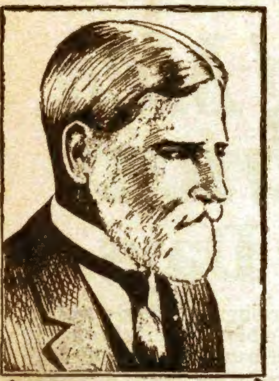

T. O'CONOR SLOANE.
A.B., A.M., LL.D., Ph.D.

Noted Instructor, Lecturer and Author. Formerly Treasurer American Chemical Society and a practical chemist with many well known achievements to his credit. Not only has Dr. Sloane taught chemistry for years but he was for many years, engaged in commercial chemistry work.

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What Some of Our Students Say of This Course:

I have not written since I received the big set. I can still say that it far exceeded my anticipations. Since I have been studying with your school I have been appointed chemist for the Scranton Coal Co. testing all the coal and ash by proximate analysis. The lessons are helping me wonderfully, and the interesting way in which they are written makes me wait patiently for each lesson.—MORLAIS COUZENS.

I wish to express my appreciation of your prompt reply to my letter and to the recommendation to the General Electric Co. I intend to start the student engineering course at *the works. This is somewhat along electrical* lines, but the fact that I had a recommendation from a reliable school no doubt had considerable influence in helping me to secure the job.—H. VAN BENTHUYSEN.

So far I've been more than pleased with your course and am still doing nicely. I hope to be your honor graduate this year.—J. M. NORKUS, JR.

I find your course excellent and your instruction, truthfully, the clearest and best assembled I have ever taken, and yours is the fifth one I've studied.—JAMES J. KELLY.

From the time I was having Chemistry it has never been thus explained to me as it is now. I am recommending you highly to my friends, and urging them to become members of such an organization.—CHARLES BENJAMIN.

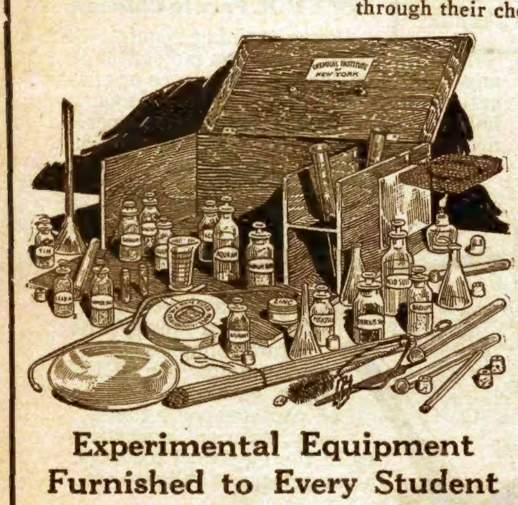
I shall always recommend your school to my friends and let them know how simple your lessons are.—C. J. AMDAHL.

I am more than pleased. You dig right in from the start. I am going to get somewhere with this course. I am so glad that I found you.—A. A. CAMERON.

I use your lessons constantly as I find it more thorough than most text books I can secure.—WM. H. TIBBS.

Thanking you for your lessons, which I find not only clear and concise, but wonderfully interesting. I am—ROBT. H. TRAYLOR.

I received employment in the Consolidated Gas. Co. I appreciate very much the good service of the school when a recommendation was asked for.—JOS. DECKER.



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AMAZING STORIES
THE
MAGAZINE
OF
SCIENTIFICTION

MARCH, 1927
No. 12

HUGO GERNSBACK, *Editor*
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Editorial and General Offices: 53 Park Place, New York, N. Y.

Extravagant Fiction Today - - - - - - - - Cold Fact Tomorrow

IDLE THOUGHTS OF A BUSY EDITOR

By HUGO GERNSBACK

BEGINNING with this issue you will note a difference in paper. We have gone to a great expense to adopt this excellent paper, which is much smoother and prints very much better than our former art paper, which some correspondents felt inclined to call "wrapping paper." Of course the magazine does not bulk as much now, and we have made the change only because so many people wrote us saying that they did not like the paper. A vote-taking among some 200 people brought out this surprising result—over 190 were in favor of the new paper. Of course this new paper costs us a lot more, but we want, first of all to please you.

* * *

The above is the style in which this sort of thing is usually dished-up by an up-to-date editor, but the plain and unvarnished truth is that the new paper costs less money than the old. You probably would not believe this, and class it as an amazing story. Nevertheless, it does cost us less. When we originally brought out AMAZING STORIES, we thought it necessary to hand you a big package for the money. Hence the bulky paper, which was made specially for our requirements. Such a paper had never been made before. Now it is known as AMAZING STORIES Bulky Weave. We are sorry to discontinue it, because we personally liked it. But we know you will like the new paper, and that, after all, is what counts.

* * *

As a correspondent remarked to us, the editor of AMAZING STORIES does not lie on a bed of roses. Quite the contrary. The bed is full of thorns, and if there are roses present, I do not give a scent for them.

It is the most difficult paper that it has been my good luck to edit. The strange fact is that there are no two readers who like the same thing. It is astonishing that the voting coupons show that almost exactly 50 per cent of the readers heartily dislike one story, whereas the other 50 per cent laud the same story to the skies. Stories like "Station X," "The Second Deluge," "The First Men in the Moon," "The Red Dust," all were in this class. A great many readers wrote very complimentary remarks on these stories and voted their preference for them, and almost exactly the same number of readers denounced the same stories.

If you, dear reader, were the editor, what would your reaction be to such a condition. Would you hesitate about the next story before publishing it, or would you simply throw yourself to the fishes and simultaneously throw up the sponge?

I do neither. I simply keep right on smiling, because I seem to have an idea in the back of my head which during more lucid moments probably runs somewhat as follows:

"Here we have AMAZING STORIES, a totally new sort of magazine, different from any that has ever been published anywhere so far. It is, in other words, a pioneer job. No one ever having published such a magazine, there is no precedent. Having made scientifiction a hobby since I was 8 years old, I probably know as much about it as any one, and in the long run experience will teach just what type of story is acclaimed by the vast majority. Give the readers the very best type of stories that you can get hold of. Try out the best classics first, and get the readers' reactions. When the magazine has been published for a year, you will have a pretty good idea what sort of story makes the greatest appeal.

"In the meanwhile, you are sailing uncharted seas, and as such you are apt to strike rocks once in a while, but if the navigating is done skillfully, the magazine must keep afloat."

The above is very likely what is happening, evidently we are not making a mess of it, because we are printing 150,000 copies at the present time, and the sales seem to be climbing month after month. It is a healthy sign, and shows that there is room for the scientifiction type of magazine.

* * *

May we ask you, particularly this month, to fill in the voting coupon? You will notice it has been changed somewhat. Several questions as to the illustrations have been included and we should like to have your reactions in connection with these questions. The majority, as usual, will win.

* * *

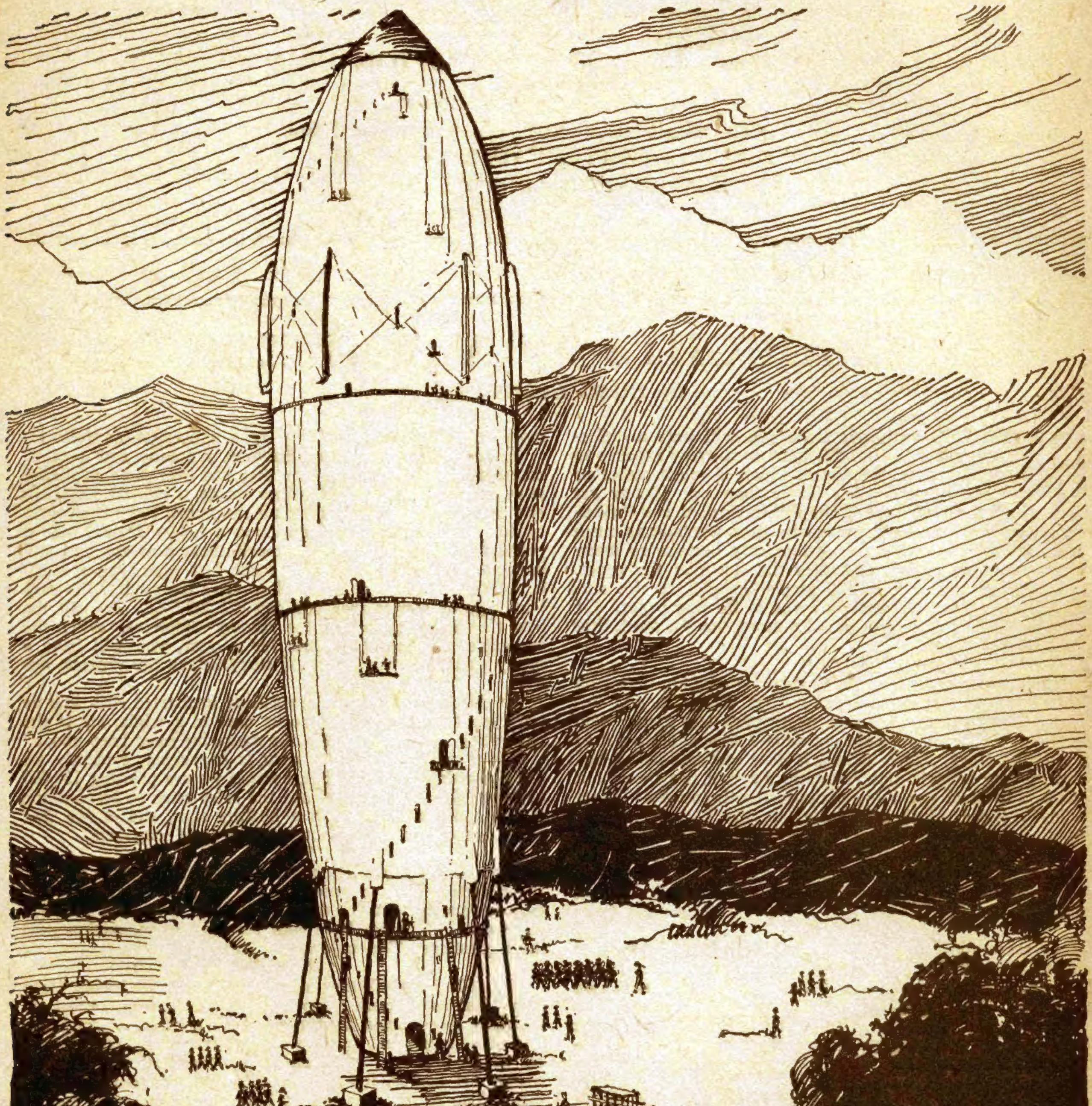
The $500 Prize Contest announced in our December issue closed just as we were going to press. It has been a most astonishing success, and far surpassed our greatest expectations. Both the quality and quantity were most gratifying. We received no less than 360 manuscripts from all parts of the world. Of course, it was impossible, as yet, to read all of them. The majority, however, have been quite good and an astonishing amount of ingenuity was shown. We shall begin publishing some of the prize winners in an early issue.

While the growth of AMAZING STORIES has so far progressed at a fairly satisfactory rate, we are far from satisfied. More readers are what we want. As you noticed, we recently put on an advertising section and added the "Discussions" Department. This, by the way, has been widely acclaimed and is eagerly read by most of our readers. Now, if each one of our readers would call the attention of a friend to AMAZING STORIES, we should soon be in a position to add 50 per cent more text to the magazine. It is our aim to get out a book with at least 150 pages, during the coming year. If you want it—boost AMAZING STORIES.

Mr. Hugo Gernsback speaks every Monday at 9 P. M. from WRNY on various scientific and radio subjects.

The GREEN SPLOTCHES

~ *By T. S. Stribling* ~



Not more than three hundred yards distant rose an enormous structure in the shape of a Zeppelin. It required a second glance to observe this fact, as the huge creation stood on its end instead of lying horizontal as do the ordinary flying-ships. . . . *This was no mere bubble of varnished cloth.*

(Transcribed from the field notes of James B. Standifer, Secretary DeLong Geographical Expedition to the Rio Infiernillo, Peru, with introductory note by J. B. S.)

Secretary's Note

THIS strange, not to say sinister, record of the DeLong Geographical Expedition to the department of Ayacucho, Peru, is here given to the public in order that a wider circulation of the facts herein set forth may lead to some solution of the enigmas with which this narrative is laden.

These field notes have been privately circulated among the members of the DeLong Geographical Society, and the addenda to this account written by our president, Hilbert H. DeLong, have proved highly gratifying to the writer. No doubt this effort at publicity will bring forward another and equally interesting hypothesis.

It is hardly necessary to warn readers who devote themselves exclusively to fiction that this record is not for them.

Fiction deals in probabilities; geographical societies, unfortunately, are confined to facts. Fiction is a record of imaginary events, which, nevertheless, adheres to and explains human experience. Facts continually step outside of experience and offer riddles and monstrosities.

Thus, in a way, fiction is much truer than fact. Fiction is generalized truth; it is an international legal tender accredited everywhere; fact is a very special truth, which passes current only with the most discerning—or with none.

Therefore, the writer wishes heartily to commend the great American scramble after fiction. It shows our enlightened public wishes to get at the real universal truths of Life, without wasting precious moments on such improbabilities as science, history, archeology, biography, invention and exploration.

To the last of this censored list these field notes unfortunately belong.

In conclusion the writer wishes to admit that he favors the Incan theory in explaining this narrative, and the reader is warned that this prejudice may color these notes. However, it has not been the writer's intention to do violence, through any twisting of fact, to the Bolshevik theory of Prof. Demetrius Z. Demetriovich, the Rumanian attaché *to the expedition, or to the Jovian hypothesis of our esteemed president, the Hon. Gilbert H. DeLong, than whom, be it said, no man is more tolerant of the views of others.—James B. Standifer, Sec. DeL. Geo. Exp., Sept.* 17, 1919.

Transcriber's Note

THE writer met the DeLong Geographical Expedition at Colon in June, 1919, *on its way to New York. His curiosity was strongly aroused by the fact that every member of the party, even to the twenty-four-year-old secretary of the expedition, seemed to be suffering from some nervous complaint in the nature of shell shock.*

At that time the writer was correspondent for the Associated Press and he naturally saw a "story" in the returning scientists. After some effort and persuasion, he obtained Mr. Standifer's field notes and photographs. The photographs were practically worthless on account of the deterioration of the films. And a single glance through the notes showed him that they were not practicable "A. P." material. After much consideration and many discussions with Mr. Standifer, the writer decided that the only possible form in which these strange memoranda could be placed before the public was in the guise of fiction.

IF any one were to ask us for a perfect example of the scientifiction story, we would perhaps unhesitatingly say "The Green Splotches." Here is a story that mixes science with fiction to the nth degree. It is a story that will persist in your memory for many years. You can never forget it. Then, also, you will get more out of it by reading it a second and third time than you did the first time. With each reading the story will improve, and it will give you more food for thought. Here, then, is the scientifiction story par excellence, and we know in advance that when you fill in your voting coupon, this story will rank first.

Unfortunately this disguise is neither deep nor cleverly done. The crude outline of the actual occurrences destroys all approach to plot. Many of the incidents are irrelevant, but the only condition upon which Mr. Standifer would agree to this publication at all was that the record be given in extenso, *"for the benefit," he stated, "of future and more studious generations."*

In fact, throughout the writer's association with him, Mr. Standifer seemed of a sour, not to say misanthropic disposition. His sarcasm, which he hurls at the American fiction-reading public in his prefatory note, is based entirely, the writer believes, on the fact that Standifer wrote a book of travel called "Reindeer in Iceland," which he published at his own expense and which entirely failed to sell. That, no doubt, is enough to acidulate the sweetest disposition, but in a way it goes to prove that Standifer's notes on the Peruvian expedition are a painstaking and literal setting forth of genuine experiences, for a perusal of his book entitled, "Reindeer in Iceland," which the writer purchased from Mr. Standifer for fifty-four cents, shows its author has absolutely no imagination whatever.

It is hardly worth while to add that the explanatory note appended to this narrative by that distinguished scholar and author, the Right Honorable Gilbert H. DeLong, has not been touched by this pen.—T. S., Sept. 27, 1919.

SENOR IGNACIO RAMADA, prefect of the department of Ayacucho, tapped his red lips under his mustache to discourage an overpowering yawn. It was mid *siesta*, high noon. He had been routed out of profound slumber by his *cholo*—boy—and presented with a long, impressive document with a red seal. Now he stood in the Salle des Armes of the governor's mansion, holding in his hand the letter of introduction from the *presidente* of the Lima Sociedad de Geografico, very much impressed even amid his sleepiness by the red seal of the Sociedad and by the creaking new equipment of his callers.

"How, *señores*, can I assist in such a glorious undertaking?" he inquired in Spanish.

"We need guides," explained Prof. Demetriovich, who was the linguist of the party.

"Where does your journey carry you, *caballeros?*" inquired the official, crackling the parchment in his hand.

"To the region beyond the Mantaro, called the Valley of the Rio Infiernillo."

Señor Ramada came out of his sleepiness with a sort of start.

"No!"

"Yes."

The prefect looked at his guests.

"Señores, no one goes there."

Pethwick, the engineer, smiled.

"If the region were quite well known, *Señor* Ramada, it would hold little attraction for a geographical exploration party."

"Well, that's true," agreed the prefect after a moment's thought, "but it will be quite difficult to get a guide for that place; in fact—" here he swept his visitors with a charming smile—"the better a man knows that region, the farther he keeps away from it. Seriously, gentlemen, why not explore more hospitable locality, where one can find a comfortable inn at night and procure relays of llamas whenever necessary, for your baggage?"

Pethwick smiled friendlily.

"We did think of exploring the suburbs of Lima, but the street service was so bad—"

"Do you read novels?" inquired Standifer, the young secretary of the expedition.

"Why—yes," admitted the prefect, taken aback. "I am fond of Cisneros, Lavalle, Arestegui—"

The secretary pressed his lips together, nodded disdainfully and without further remark looked away through the entrance into the diamond-like brilliance of tropical sunshine in mountainous regions.

The prefect stared. *"Señor,"* he said rather sharply, "if you do not approve my literary taste—"

Pethwick stepped to the little Spaniard's side and whispered quickly:

"Overlook it, *señor*, overlook it. Literature is a tender point with him. He has lost one hundred and fifty-four dollars and forty-seven cents on an unprofitable literary venture. In fact, he is a young author."

He nodded confidentially at the prefect.

The official, with Latin delicacy, nodded back and patted Pethwick's arm to show that all was again well. Pethwick then said aloud:

"So we shall have to try to find our own way into the Valley de Rio Infiernillo?"

Ramada looked worried. Presently he slapped his hand on a mahogany sword cabinet that glowed warmly in the subdued light of the *salle*.

"Señores!" he cried, rattling the letter of introduction with his left hand. "It shall never be said that the prefect of the department of Ayacucho did not exert plenary powers to aid in disclosing to the world the enormous riches of his province and his native land!"

"So we may expect something?" inquired M. Demetriovich.

"I have the power to force some one to go with you," dramatically announced Ramada.

"Whom?" asked Standifer, looking around.

"Naturally my authority doesn't extend over freemen," conditioned the prefect.

"Your slaves?" inquired the secretary.

"Sir," announced the prefect, "wherever the Peruvian banner waves, Freedom smiles!"

"What at?" inquired the literal secretary.

As the governor was about to take new offense the old Rumanian hastily inquired:

"Whom do we get, *Señor* Ramada?"

"Señores, a garroting has been widely and I believe successfully advertised to take place on the fifth of August. If I may say it, *caballeros*, my political career depends in great measure on meeting fully and completely the thrills offered by the prospectuses. The executions will be followed by a bull-fight. It was, gentlemen, if I may say it, it was to be the turning point of my political career, upon the prestige of which I meant to make my race for the presidency of our republic.

"Gentlemen, a time comes in the life of every statesman when he can sacrifice his country to his personal ambition, or his personal ambition to his country. That moment has now come in the life of Gonzales Pizarro Ramada. Gentlemen, I make it. Gentlemen, I am going to remit the extreme penalty placed by the *cortes* upon a murderer and a highwayman and permit them to go with you, gentlemen, as guides into the Valle de Rio Infiernillo."

Pethwick, who had been smiling with immense enjoyment at this rodomontade, straightened his face.

"A murderer and a highwayman!"

"Charming fellows," assured the prefect. "I often walk down to the *carcel* and converse with them. Such *chic!* Such original ideas on the confiscation of money—really very entertaining!"

The expedition looked at the eulogist a moment.

"Give us a minute to talk this over, *Señor* Ramada?" requested M. Demetriovich.

The prefect made the accentuated bow of a politician, adding that the republic would be proud to furnish chains and handcuffs to guarantee that her sons did their duty in the discharge of a patriotic function.

The three gentlemen of the DeLong Geographical Expedition spent an anxious five minutes in debate. Presently Pethwick called:

"Señor Ramada, are you absolutely sure we cannot procure guides who are less—questionable for this journey?"

"Gentlemen, to be frank," said the prefect, who had also been studying over the matter, "I doubt very much whether either Cesare Ruano or Pablo Pasca would be willing to accompany you under those terms. I cannot force them. The law prohibits any unusual or cruel infliction of the death penalty and to send them to the Valley of the Rio Infiernillo would fall under that prohibition."

The four men stood meditating in the Salle des Armes. Professor Demetriovich stirred.

"Let's go have a talk with them," he suggested.

CONTRARY to Ramada's fears, Cesare Ruano, the man-killer, and Pablo Pasca, the road-agent, proved willing to escort the party to the Rio Infiernillo. So on the following day the expedition set forth with the legs of the convicts chained under their mules' bellies.

Ayacucho turned out *en masse* to watch the departure of so distinguished a cavalcade, and it might as well be admitted at once that none of the adventurers made so brave a showing or saluted the villagers with more graceful bows than did Cesare Ruano or Pablo Pasca. In fact, they divided the plaudits of the crowd about equally with the prefect, who kept murmuring to Pethwick:

"Not a bad stroke, *Señor* Pethwick, not a bad stroke."

The legs of the convicts were chained, naturally, to prevent any sudden leave-taking, but this plan held disadvantages. When one of the llama packs became loosened, either the scientists had to bungle the job themselves or take the leg-cuffs off their prisoners and allow them to dismount and do it for them. This entailed endless chaining and unchaining, which quickly grew monotonous and at length was abandoned after the geographers had exacted a solemn pledge of the two cutthroats not to run away. That much of the contract the guides kept to the letter. They never did run away, although the company lost them.

M. Demetriovich retained the manacles on the horn of his saddle, where, he told Pethwick, he hoped their jingle would have a great moral effect.

Oddly enough both the convicts were entirely innocent of the charges preferred against them, upon which they were convicted and so nearly executed.

Pablo Pasca told the whole circumstance to Pethwick. He, Pablo, did meet an old man one freezing July night in a mountain pass on the road to Ayacucho. They stopped and held some converse and Pablo had borrowed from him two hundred and forty-seven *sols*. Then what did this ingrate of a creditor do but beat his head against a tree, break an arm, go before a *magistrado* and charge Pasca with highway robbery.

Pablo's black eyes flashed as he related the incident. He had been amazed at such calumny, which he could not disprove. The jury believed the old wretch and sentenced Pablo to the garrote.

However, the One Who Ruled the Earth knew the truth, and Pasca prayed every night that he should not have his spinal cord snapped on such an unjust charge. So the One Who Ruled sent this society of fine gentlemen and scholars to fraternize with Pablo and to lift him to an exalted station. So he, Pablo, supposed now all the neighbors saw that his oath, as strange as it sounded, was true to the last jot and title. The padre in his visits to the *carcel* had taught Pablo a little verse which he should never forget: "Seest thou a man diligent in his profession—he shall sit before kings."

Cesare Ruano did not go so much into detail as did his fellow guide and friend, but he told Pethwick that the crime for which he was sentenced to the garrote was trivial and with a shrug of his shoulders let it go at that.

The trivial affair, however, had left a number of marks on Ruano's person, all of which the Ayacucho police had tabulated. A copy of this table was given M. Demetriovich in order that he might advertise for Cesare in case he should desert.

Pethwick read the inventory. It ran:

> Cesare Ruano, a *cholo*, 27 years, reddish yellow, height 5ft. 7in., weight 84 kilos, (189 lbs), muscular, broad face, prominent cheek-bones, straight nose with wide nostrils, very white teeth, handsome. Scars: from right eyebrow through the right cheek to the lobe of ear; from left side of neck to the middle of chest bone; horizontal scar from nipple to nipple, rifle or pistol wound in right leg, two inches above knee; three buckshot in back, one in left buttock; little toe on left foot missing. Disposition uncommunicative, but of pleasant address and cheerful until irritated. A very handy man. Note: In case of arrest, officers are advised to shoot before accosting Ruano.

ON the first few nights the travelers found lodgings at little mountain inns, whose red-peaked roofs of tiles were pulled down like caps over tiny eye-like windows. The tunnel-like entrance to such a hostelry always looked like a black mouth squared in horror at something it saw across the mountains.

This was much the same expression that the proprietor and guests wore when they learned the travelers were bound for the Rio Infiernillo.

Pablo Pasca always broke the news of their destination in rather dramatic style to the gamesters and hangers-on with which these centers of mountain life were crowded.

"*Señores*," he would harangue, "you see before you a man sentenced to death; but because no garrote could affect his throat, so hard has it become from drinking gin, the prefect decided to send him on a journey to the Rio Infiernillo! Let us drink to our good fortune!"

This announcement usually brought roars of applause and laughter. Once a roisterer shouted:

"But your companions; what caused them to be sent?"

And Pablo answered with a droll gesture:

"One is a murderer; the rest are Americans!"

It made a great hit. The crowd invited Pablo to share its brandy.

However, after these introductions the landlord would presently stop laughing and after some questions invariably warn the scientists against their "mad undertaking." On two such occasions the proprietor became so earnest and excited that he begged the *señores* to walk out with him up the mountain-side to see for themselves the terrors that confronted them.

Pethwick never forgot his first glimpse of the mystery that colored his thoughts and dreams for the remainder of his life.

The night was clear but moonless. The party climbed uncertainly in darkness up a scarp of boulders and spurs of primitive rock. The landlord picked his way toward a clump of calisaya trees silhouetted against the sky. The chill air was shot with the fragrance of mountain violets. The climbers lent each other hands until the landlord reached a protruding root and then everybody scrambled up.

Pethwick dropped down breathless at the foot of the tree, his heart beating heavily. At first he was faintly amused at his host's promise of a portent, but this amusement vanished presently amid the solemnity of night and the mountains.

The very stars above him wore the strange aspect of the Southern constellations. Against their glimmer the Andes heaved mighty shoulders. Peak beyond peak, they stood in cold blackness, made more chill and mysterious by the pallor of snow-fields.

The whole group shivered in silence for several minutes. At last M. Demetriovich asked with a shake in his Spanish:

"Well, *amigo*, what is there to see?"

"Wait," began the landlord.

At that moment a star shot far out against the blackness.

"Alla!" gasped the Peruvian.

Pethwick shivered and grinned. He had brought them up to see a shooting star.

"But wait!" begged their host, sensing the engineer's mirth.

Almost at once from where the star seemed to strike arose a faint, glowing haze as indefinite as the Milky Way. It must have been miles distant. In front of it two or three massifs were outlined and others, farther away, were dimly truncated by its radiance.

The *huésped* drew a long breath.

"Now there lies the Rio Infiernillo," he chattered. "It is a land from which no man returns alive. I have known many men to go, *señores*, thinking surely there must be great treasure where so much danger lay—and there may be, *señores*. No man can say. Every man has his opinion about the matter. I will tell frankly what mine is—"

He paused, evidently waiting for some one to urge his opinion.

Instead, Standifer spoke up:

"My opinion is it's a meteor and a phosphorescent display which sometimes follows."

The landlord laughed through the darkness with immense scorn of such a puerile opinion.

"What is yours?" inquired Pethwick.

"Señores," defined the tavern-keeper solemnly, "that stream is called the Rio Infiernillo for a very good reason. For there every night comes the devil to dig gold to corrupt the priests, and—and, of course, the Protestants, too," he added charitably. "But he can never do it, *Señores*. Let him dig till he scoops down the mountains and reaches his own country, which is the source of the Rio Infiernillo—he will never do it!"

"Has any one ever seen where he has dug?" asked Pethwick, amused again.

"Si, señor."

"I thought you said no one ever went over there and got back alive," observed Pethwick carelessly.

A slight pause; then the landlord explained:

"This man only lived a few minutes after he fell into my door. I saw him. His hair was white. He was burned. I heard his last words. No one else heard him."

This was uttered with such solemnity that Pethwick never knew whether it was an account of some weird tragedy of the mountains or whether it was cut out of whole cloth.

That night after Pethwick had gone to bed in the upper story of the hostelry, while the laughing and drinking flowed steadily below, it occurred to him that it was odd, after all, that the landlord should have led them on such a clamber to see a shooting star and a haze—and the two phenomena should have occurred so promptly.

ON the following night another landlord led them out on the same mission and showed them the same set of wonders. His explanation was even more fantastic than the first.

Before the party retired that second night, Pethwick asked of M. Demetriovich:

"Professor, what is the probability that two meteors should perform the same evolutions in the same quarter of the sky and apparently strike in about the same place on two nights in succession?"

"I'd thought of that problem," returned the savant yawning. "In fact, I have set down some tentative figures on the subject." Here he referred to a little note-book. "It is roughly one chance in two-million."

"Small," observed Pethwick.

"That was for the stars alone. For two stars to fall in the same region, each time followed by a phosphorescence, diminishes the probabiltiy to one chance in eight trillion."

Pethwick whistled softly.

"In fact, it was not a meteorite we saw," concluded the professor, crawling into bed.

CHAPTER II

PABLO PASCA shouted something from perhaps a hundred yards up the trail. He was hidden from the string of toiling riders by a fold in the precipice. Pethwick looked ahead and saw two vultures launch themselves out over the abyss. One swung back down the face of the mountain and passed within forty feet of the party, its feathers whistling, its bald, whitish head turning for a look at the intruders and its odor momentarily tainting the cold wind.

A moment later the engineer saw the two guides had dismounted and their mules were snorting and jerking on the very edge of the precipice. The men themselves were staring at something and Pasca seemed almost as panic-stricken as the animals. The unquietness spread rapidly down the string of baggage-carriers.

Pethwick slid off his mount and hurried forward, slipping inside the llamas and dodging past the uncertain heels of the mules. He came out by the side of Pablo to a queer, not to say gruesome sight.

In the air circled eight or ten vultures. They had been frightened from a row of skeletons, which evidently were articulated on wires and iron rods and stood before the travelers in the awkward postures such objects assume. Among the things, Pethwick recognized the whitened frames of snake, condor, sheep, vicuña, puma, monkey and at the end, standing upright, the bones of a man.

The specimens were accurately spaced around the end of the trail, for this was the last of the road. The skulls grinned fixedly at the DeLong Geographical Expedition. In the gusty wind the arms of the man swung and beat against his thigh bone in a grotesque travesty of mirth.

Something touched Pethwick from behind. He turned with a shudder and saw Standifer. The secretary of the expedition looked at the assemblage for a moment, then drew out his note-book and pen, gave the pen a fillip to start a flow of ink and methodically jotted down the list before him. When he had finished he glanced up inquiringly as he rescrewed the top on his writing instrument.

"Don't suppose any one is moving a museum, eh, Pethwick?"

"No," said the engineer, studying the figures.

"You don't think so?" surprised.

"Certainly not!"

"Huh!" Standifer drew forth his book again. "Makes a sort of little mystery of it, doesn't it?" And he jotted down this fact.

Prof. Demetriovich made his observation on the probable source of the objects before them.

"Standifer's hypothesis is not as bad as it sounds, Pethwick," observed the savant.

"You don't mean these really belong to some scientist?" cried the engineer.

"I think their arrangement proves it."

The engineer looked at the professor curiously.

"These skeletons are arranged in the order of their evolutionary development."

A glance showed this to be the case and it rather surprised Pethwick.

"Does that hold any significance?"

M. Demetriovich walked over to the frame of the puma and shook it slightly as he inspected it.

"It would suggest a scientist arranged these specimens. A savage or a rustic would have been more likely to have strung them out according to size, or else he would have mixed them higgledy-piggledy, and the probability that he would have hit on their evolutionary order would have been remote indeed." The professor gave the puma's bones another shake. "Besides that, this articulation is very cleverly done—too cleverly for unpractised hands."

"But why should a scientist leave his specimens out like this?" demanded the engineer in amazement.

"To begin with, this seems to be the end of the trail—the shipping-point, so to speak, and for the further reason that water boils at a very low temperature at this altitude."

As the professor's fingers had touched some particles of flesh still adhering to the puma's vertebræ, he stepped across to a little patch of snow, stooped and washed his hands in it.

His two companions stared at him.

"Water boiling at a low temperature—altitude—what's that got to do with it?" interrogated the engineer.

The scientist smiled.

"I thought you would see that. If boiling water is too cool to clean the bones properly, here are some very trustworthy assistants above us."

M. Demetriovich indicated the vultures still soaring overhead.

The secretary, who had been scribbling rapidly during the last part of this discourse, now crossed out a few lines on a former page with the remark: "Well, there is no mystery to it after all."

"But look here!" ecxlaimed Pethwick. "We're scooped!"

"What do you mean—scooped?" asked the old Rumanian.

"Somebody has beaten us to this field. There are rival explorers in these mountains."

"Tut, tut," chided the old man. "You should say, my dear Pethwick, we have 'colleagues' instead of 'rivals,' I am charmed to believe they are here. We must get with them and try to be of assistance to them."

The kindly old scientist stared away among the great bluish peaks, speculating on where his "colleagues" would be.

"But look here," objected Standifer in alarm; "there will be another secretary with that expedition, grabbing all this literary material—"

"Lads, lads," reproached the old savant, "you have yet to learn the opulence of nature. She is inexhaustible. This party, another party, fifty parties toiling at the same time could never fathom all the marvels that lie under the sweep of our gaze. Why, gentlemen, for instance, in Bucharest I and a colleague worked for three years on the relation of the olfactory system of catarrhine monkeys with that of human beings. Our effort was to approximate in what epoch the sense of smell became of secondary importance to humanity. This, of course, would mark a great change in the mode of living among men.

"As I say, we spent three years on the two nervous systems and yet our discoveries were most dissimilar. Now, what are a few white nerve-threads to all this wilderness of snow and boulders? Your fears are quite baseless."

HIS two companions laughed, half ashamed of their jealousy, and then inspected the scene before them, which up till now had been lost in the grisly detail of the skeletons.

The mountain side on which they stood dropped away in an enormous declivity fully a mile and a half deep and led into a vast and sinister valley that stretched toward the northeast until its folds and twists were lost among the flashing peaks.

The extraordinary part of the scene was that instead of spreading the vivid green of the tropics below the tree-line this great depression looked black and burned. The ensemble recalled to Pethwick certain remarkable erosions he had seen in the West of the United States. Only here, the features were slashed out with a gigantism that dwarfed our western canyons and buttes.

And there was another striking difference. In the North American West the Grand Canyon and the

Yosemite glow with a solemn beauty. The chasm looked like the raw and terrible wound of fire. Its blackened and twisted acclivities might have been the scars of some terrible torment.

A river lay through the center of this cicatrix, and although later it proved nearly half a mile wide, it was reduced to a mere rivulet amid such cyclopean setting. It twisted in and out, now lost to view, now shimmering in the distance, everywhere taking the color of its surroundings and looking for the world like one of those dull, spreading adders winding through the valley.

Pethwick now fully understood why the Indians had given the peculiar name to the river. It was a sobriquet any human being would have bestowed upon it at first glimpse. It required no guide to tell Pethwick he was looking down upon the Rio Infiernillo.

"This is the place, *señor*," said Pablo Pasca. "Do we start back from here?"

Pethwick looked at him in surprise.

"We'll spend the next sixty days in this valley."

"I mean Cesare and myself, *señor*," explained the Zambo in hangdog fashion.

"You and Cesare!"

"We have shown you the Valley of the Rio Infiernillo—that was all we promised, *señor*," pursued Pablo doggedly.

Ruano glanced around. "Speak for yourself, Pablo!"

"You are not going into this den of Satan, are you?" cried Pablo to the murderer. "Past these—these"—he nodded at the skeletons.

Ruano grinned, showing two rows of big white teeth. "I'll go help make some more skeletons," he said carelessly.

Pethwick began to explain away Pasca's fears. "Those are nothing but the specimens of a scientific expedition, Pablo."

"Do scientific expeditions collect skeletons?" shuddered the thief.

"Yes."

"Will you do that?"

"Very probably."

"And leave them for the birds to pick?"

"If we don't boil them." Pethwick grew more amused as the fears of his guide mounted.

"*Dios Mio!* What for?"

"To study them," laughed the engineer.

Pablo turned a grayish yellow.

"And you kill men and let the buzzards pick their bones—to study them?" aspirated the half-breed. "Will you kill me—and Ruano?"

"Certainly not!" ejaculated Pethwick, quite shocked. "What a silly idea!"

"But the other gang did, *señor*," cried the Zambo, nodding at the skeleton of the man at the end of the line, "and no doubt, *señor*, they told their guide that all was well, that everything was as it should be, until one fine day—*pang!*"

"And here he stands, grinning at me, slapping his knee to see another big fool go down the scarp."

At such a hideous suspicion all three scientists began a shocked denial.

What did Pablo take them for—ghouls? They were civilized men, scientists, professors, engineers, authors.

"Then why did you choose for guides two men condemned to death unless it was to kill them and stay within the law?"

They reassured the robber so earnestly that he was half convinced, when unfortunately an extra gust of wind set the skeleton clapping his knee again.

The gruesome mirth set Pablo almost in a frenzy.

"*Ehue!* Yes! But how did the other party get their man? No doubt they found a dead man in this devil's country! Oh, yes, dead men are frequent in this place where men never go! They didn't kill their guide to study his bones. Oh, no! Not at all! Ha! No! He dropped dead. Very reasonable! Ho!"

With a yell he dropped his mule's rein and leaped for the mouth of the trail.

BUT Cesare Ruano was quicker than the thief. The murderer made one leap, caught the flying Zambo by the shoulder and brought him in a huddle on the stones.

The robber shrieked, screamed, began a chattering prayer.

"Oh, Holy Mary! Blessed Virgin! Receive my soul! I am to be killed! Blessed Queen!"

The words seemed to arouse some sort of anger in Cesare, for the big fellow shook Pablo till his teeth rattled.

"Shut up squeaking, you rabbit! Can't you tell when a man is about to murder you? These are gentlemen! You will stay with this party, coward! and do the work! You will help me! I will not leave them and neither will you. *Sabe?*"

As he accented this "*Sabe?*" with a violent shake, Pablo's head nodded vigorously whether he wanted it to or not.

Oddly enough the trouncing seemed to reassure Pasca more than all the arguments of the scientists.

"You are a shrewd man, Cesare," he gasped as soon as he was allowed to speak. "Are you sure they won't hurt us?"

Ruano laughed again, with a flash of teeth.

"They can't hurt me. I could mash these little men with my thumb. Whom are you afraid of, Pablo—the old gray man who can hardly walk?"

"Why, no," admitted the thief looking at M. Demetriovich.

"Or of that bean-pole boy, whose head is so weak he cannot remember the simplest thing without writing it in a book."

"Nor him either," agreed Pablo with a glance at Standifer."

"Or the engineer who cannot lift a hand without gasping for breath?"

"Anyway," argued Pasca, half convinced, "how did those other geographers manage to kill their guide? Perhaps they shot him when he was asleep."

"They were not geographers," snapped Ruano, "at least they were not like these men."

"How do you know?"

"Could another such a party be in the mountains and all the country not hear of it? Even in prison we heard the great American scientists were going to the Rio Infiernillo. Then take these men—would they tie all these bones together if they wanted to pack them on llamas to Ayacucho? You know they would not. They would take them apart and put them in sacks until they reached America."

"Why, that's a fact," agreed Pasca, staring at the skeletons with new interest. "Certainly no llama would carry one of these things." He stared a moment longer and added: "But perhaps these other scientists were also fools and did not think of that."

"Then they would not have had wit enough to kill their guide. It takes some wit to kill a man, Pablo, I assure you."

Naturally the geographers had been listening to this very candid opinion of their party. Now M. Demetriovich inquired, not without a certain respect in his voice:

"*Señor* Ruano, I may be wrong in my judgment. How do you think those skeletons came here?"

"*Señor*, returned the convict respectfully, "this is the Rio Infiernillo. I think the devil put them here to scare men away, so they cannot look into hell while they are alive. Because if they had a look, *señor*, it would be so horrible they would change their lives, become good men and go to heaven—and so the devil would lose patronage."

Standifer, who was chagrined with Ruano's description of himself, grunted out the word "barbarous." Pethwick shouted with laughter.

With a blush Standifer drew out his notebook. As he did so, he said to Cesare:

"These entries are made, not because I lack intelligence, as you seem to think, but because I am the official secretary of this expedition; besides I am an author. I wrote a book called "Reindeer in Iceland."

A fit of coughing seized Pethwick.

"I meant nothing by what I said, *Señor* Standifer," explained Ruano, "except to hearten this rabbit. Think nothing of it" He turned to the crowd as a whole. "We will never get the mules and llamas past the skeletons, so we will have to remove the skeletons past the mules and llamas."

This plan recommended itself to the whole party and everybody set to work. The men lugged the things past the trembling animals and finally lined them up behind the cavalcade. They placed the human frame at the head of the troop, just as they had found it.

As Pethwick rode away he looked back at it. There it stood, representing the summit of creation, the masterpiece of life. It rattled its phalanges against its femur and grinned a long-toothed grin at the vast joke of existence—an evolutionary climb of a hundred-million years, a day or two of sunshine, a night or two of sleep, a little stirring, a little looking around, and poof! back it was where it had started a hundred million years ago. No wonder skeletons grin!

ON the forward journey it transpired that Cesare Ruano had obtained a sort of moral ascendency over the whole party.

He certainly had set the whole crowd straight about the skeletons. They had talked for an hour to decide where they came from and in half a dozen words Cesare proved to them they knew nothing about the matter whatsoever.

Another thing that gave Cesare prestige was his abrupt quelling of Pasca's desertion. Without Cesare, the Zambo would have escaped. None of the scientists would have acted in time to stop his headlong flight.

Civilization has the unfortunate effect of slowing up men's mental operations in emergencies. Indeed, civilization places such a premium on foresight that a civilized man lacks ability to live from instant to instant. The ordinary American lives usually in next month or next year, but he is rarely at home in the "now" and "here."

This quality of concentration on the future is a splendid thing for developing inventions, building great businesses, painting great pictures, writing novels and philosophies, but it works badly indeed for guarding convicts, who invariably bolt in the present tense.

Cesare used his new authority to possess himself of a rifle.

"We don't know just who shot this skeleton," he explained very simply to M. Demetriovich, "and we don't know how many more skeletons the fellow may want. I prefer to keep mine. Now I have observed that you *señores* never glance about when you travel, but look straight into your mules' ears and think of a great many things, no doubt. But this fellow could collect your skeletons very easily. So I will take a rifle and ride before and shoot whoever it is before he shoots us."

Ruano chose Standifer's rifle for this task. The secretary was glad of it, for the weapon had been chafing his leg ever since the party left Ayacucho.

The immediate declivity leading into the Valley of the Rio Infiernillo was a field of boulders ranging in size from a man's head to a house. Far below them the tree line was marked by some small trees that had been tortured by the wind into grotesque shapes worked out by the Japanese in their dwarf trees. Here and there patches of snow disguised their precarious footing into white pitfalls.

The mules crept downward, exploring every step of the way with their little hoofs, then easing their weight forward. It made a very swaying, chafing ride. Pethwick's pommel worked against his stomach until he felt he had been sitting down a week, wrong side first.

After an endless jostle it seemed to the engineer that he was not descending in the slightest, but was being shaken back and forth, sticking in one place amid the cyclopean scenery. When he looked back, the endless boulder-field slanted toward the sky; when he looked down, it seemed as far as ever into the black and sinister valley where the river wound like an adder.

He looked to reaching the tree-line with a hope it would bring him relief from the monotony. It did not. His saddle chafed, his mule sagged and swayed. His fellow-scientists did as he was doing, squirmed about on the torturing saddle-horns. The sameness drove his mind in on itself. He began as Cesare had said, "to stare into his mule's ears and think."

He wondered about the skeletons. He wondered what "trivial" thing Cesare had done to get sentenced to the garrote. He wondered what that shooting star and the phosphorescent mist could have been? Then he wondered about the skeletons again . . . about Cesare. . . .

A rifle-shot that sounded like a mere snap in the thin mountain air disturbed his reflections. He looked up and saw a faint wisp of vapor float out of the .30-30 in Cesare's hands. The engineer glanced anxiously to see if the murderer had shot any of his companions. They were all on their mules and all looking at each other and at him. Every one in the crowd had felt instinctively that the desperado had fired at some person—possibly at one of his own party.

"What is it?" cried Standifer.

"A man yonder!" Pablo pointed.

"I don't know whether it was a man or not!" cried Ruano, jumping from his slow mule and setting off down the declivity at a hazardous run.

"Ruano!" shouted M. Demetriovich in horror. "Did you shoot at a human being like that? Drop that rifle, you bloodthirsty fellow. Drop it!"

Extraordinary to say, Cesare did drop his gun and as it struck the stones it fired again. The man plunged on downward at full tilt. It was an amazing flight. He took the boulders like a goat. The party stopped their mounts and sat watching the dash.

"Did you say it was a man?" asked the secretary shakily of Pablo.

"As sure as I am sitting here." At that moment, the flying Ruano swung in behind a large boulder.

"He was behind that!" cried Pablo sharply. Then he lifted his voice. "Did you get him, Cesare?" he shouted. "Was there any money on him?"

But almost immediately Pethwick glimpsed the murderer again, in fact saw him twice—or he may have caught a flash of two figures, one chasing the other.

SUDDENLY Pablo began yelling as if on a fox-course.

A shock of horror went through Pethwick. He knew too well what the convict would do if he caught the man. Nobody could waylay Cesare Ruano, even to look at him, in safety.

"Here, let's get down there!" cried the engineer in urgent tones. "Lord, we ought not to have given that brute a gun!"

"Maybe he hit him!" surmised Pablo in cheerful excitement.

"He's chasing him this minute somewhere behind those boulders." declared Standifer nervously.

M. Demetriovich dismounted, and from between two boulders recovered Standifer's rifle as they passed it.

Pethwick had screwed up his nerves for some dreadful sight behind the boulder, but there was nothing there. Nothing except a splotch of green liquid on the stones.

Smaller gouts of this green fluid led off down the boulder-field, making from one large boulder to another as if some dripping thing had tried to keep a covert between itself and the party of riders.

Pethwick dismounted and followed this trail perhaps a hundred yards, until it ceased. Then he stood looking about him in the cold sunshine. He could not hear the slightest sound. The blackened valley and the Infernal River lay far below him. High above him, at the end of the trail, the vultures wheeled against the sky.

CHAPTER III.

FROM his headlong pursuit down the mountain-side Cesare Ruano never returned.

What became of him none of his companions ever discovered. He dropped out of their lives as suddenly and completely as if he had dissolved into thin air.

A dozen possibilities besieged their brains. Perhaps he fell over a cliff. Or was drowned in the river. Or he may have deserted the expedition. Perhaps he was still wandering about, lost or crazed. Perhaps the man he pursued turned and killed him.

All these are pure conjectures, for they had not a clue upon which to base a rational hypothesis. The only hope for a suggestion, the green splotches on the boulders, proved to be a hopeless riddle itself.

The men picked up several of the smaller boulders and when camp was pitched Prof. Demetriovich made a chemical analysis of the stain. Its coloring matter was derived from chlorophyll. If Ruano's shot had penetrated the stomach of some running animal, it was barely possible for such a stain to have resulted—but it was improbable. This stain was free from cellular vegetal structure. In the mixture was no trace of the corpuscles or serum of blood.

On the afternoon of the second day following the incident, the men sat at the dinner-table discussing the matter.

In the tent beside the rude dining-table were cots and another table holding mineral and floral specimens and some insects. Two or three books were scattered on the cots and duffle-bags jammed the tent-corners.

Looking out through the flaps of their tent, the diners could see the eastern peaks and cliffs of the Infernal Valley turning orange under the sunset.

M. Demetriovich was talking.

"I consider the chlorophyll an added proof that there is another scientific expedition in this valley."

"What is your reasoning?" inquired Pethwick.

"Chlorophyll is a substance none but a chemist could, or rather would, procure. It serves no commercial purpose. Therefore it must be used experimentally."

"Why would a chemist want to experiment in this forsaken place?"

Standifer put in a question—

"Then you think Cesare shot a hole in a canister of chlorophyll solution?"

"When a man has a choice of improbabilities, all he can do is to choose the least improbable," explained M. Demetriovich friendlily.

"I wonder what Cesare would say about it?" speculated Pethwick.

"The green trail also suggests my theory," proceeded Prof. Demetriovich. "When Ruano shot the man behind the boulder, his victim evidently did not know that his can of solution had been punctured, for he sat hidden for perhaps a minute while his container leaked a large pool just behind the rock. Then Cesare charged, the fellow fled, losing small quantities as the liquid splashed out. At last the man observed the puncture and turned the can over and there the trail ended."

M. Demetriovich pushed his coffee cup toward Pablo without interrupting his deductions.

"I should say Cesare's bullet entered the can about an inch below the level of the liquid. That would explain why a continuous trail did not mark the fugitive."

"But why would one scientist be ambushing civilized men in a heaven-forsaken place like this?" cried Standifer in slightly supercilious tones. "And why should he carry a canister of chlorophyll around with him?"

Pethwick tapped the table with his fingers.

"It's unfair to demand the fellow's occupation, race, color and previous condition of servitude," he objected. Then after a moment: "I wish we could find Ruano ——"

M. Demetriovich stirred his coffee and looked into it without drinking, a Latin habit he had formed in the Rumanian cafés.

"If I may be so bold, *señores*," put in Pablo Pasca, "a scientist—a lone scientist would go crazy in a place like this."

This remark, while as improbable as the other guesses, nevertheless spread its suggestion of tragedy over the situation.

"Nobody knows the action of chlorophyll exactly," brooded M. Demetriovich. "Somehow it crystalizes the energy in sunlight. If some man had developed a method to bottle the sun's energy directly, he would probably pursue his investigations in the tropics ——"

"And he might desire secrecy," added Pethwick, "so much so that he would even ——"

"You mean he would murder Cesare?" finished Standifer.

"A certain type of scientific mind might do that, gentlemen," agreed Demetriovich gravely.

"What sort, professor?"

"There are only a few countries in the world capable of producing a chemist who could experiment with chlorophyll and sunlight ——"

The diners looked at the old scientist expectantly.

"Of these, I know only one country whose national creed is ruthlessness, only one whose chemists would kill an Indian on the bare possibility that the Indian might divulge his secret process—or his political affiliations."

"You mean he could be a German royalist?" queried Pethwick.

"If the Germans could synthesize the sun's energy and thus transform it directly into food, they would certainly be in a position to bid again for world dominion," stated M. Demetriovich positively. "It would annul a blockade of the seas. It would render unnecessary millions of men working in the fields and put them on the battlefront."

"But that's fantastic, professor!" cried Pethwick, "That's getting outside of probability."

"The green splotches themselves are outside of probability, Mr. Pethwick," stated the old savant gravely, "but they are here nevertheless."

"The moon is rising," observed Standifer casually.

The secretary's silly and trivial breaks into the conversation irritated Pethwick. He turned and said ——

"Well, that doesn't bother me; does it you?"

"Oh, no," said Standifer, taking the rather tart remark in good faith. "I like to watch the moon rise. If I may say it, all my best literary ideas are evolved under the moonlight."

"Trot on out and see if you can't think up something good," suggested the engineer.

Standifer caught this sarcasm, flushed slightly but did get up and walk out through the tent entrance. A moment later the two men followed him, leaving the things to Pablo.

THE rising moon centered their attention with the first glint of its disk between two peaks far down the valley. The last bronze of twilight lingered in the west. The men shivered with the chill of coming night.

Despite Pethwick's jibe at the poetical influence of the moon as expressed by the secretary, the engineer felt it himself.

"It looks whiter, more silvery in this latitude," he observed after a continued silence.

"That mist about it looks like the veil of a bride," mused the author.

"May do it," said the engineer, who despised similes, "but it looks more like a mist around the moon."

"What's the matter with you, anyway, Pethwick?" snapped Standifer, wheeling around. "Just because you lack the gift of poetical expression is no reason why you should make an ass of yourself and bray every time I utter a well-turned phrase!"

"Was that what you were doing?" inquired the older man.

"It was, and if ——"

Standifer broke off suddenly and stared, then in amazement gasped—

"For Heaven's sake!"

"What is it?" Both the older men followed his gaze.

Standifer was staring into the fading sky utterly bewildered.

Pethwick shook him.

"What is it?"

The secretary pointed skyward.

They followed his finger and saw against the dull west the delicate silver crescent of a new moon.

It required half an instant for the incoherence of their two observations to burst upon them. The next impulse, all three turned.

The full moon they had seen rising in the east had disappeared. The mist, a phosphorescent mist, still hung about the peaks; indeed it seemed to settle on the distant crags and cliffs and glow faintly in the gathering darkness. It defined a sort of spectral mountain-scape. Then, before their astounded gaze, it faded into darkness.

A scratching sound caused Pethwick to shiver. It was Pablo striking a match inside the tent.

AFTER his observation of what for want of a better name will have to be called the psuedo-moon, a curious mental apathy fell over Pethwick. Not that he failed to think of the extraordinary series of events that had befallen the expedition. He did think of them all the time. But he thought weakly, hopelessly. He picked up the problem in his brain without the slightest hope of finding the solution. He exhausted himself on the enigma, and yet he could not let it go.

He tried to forget it and center himself on his work. But little mysteries cropped out in his everyday toil. His principal duty with the expedition was map-making, the determination of the altitudes of the various observed peaks, and a mapping of the outcrops of the black micas, limonites, serpentines, pitchblendes, obsidians, and hornblendes. It was these dark-colored stones, he found, that gave the great chasm its look of incineration.

And this is what he did not understand. Here and there he found places where streams of lava sprang, apparently, out of the solid escarpment of the cliffs.

Now the whole Peruvian sierras are volcanic and these lava pockets did not surprise Pethwick. The inexplicable part was that no volcanic vent connected these little fumaroles with the interior of the mountain. They seemed to have burned from the outside. They looked as if some object of intense heat had branded the mountain-side.

Ordinarily Pethwick's mind would have sprung like a terrier at such a problem; now, through sheer brain fag, he jotted the descriptions without comment. In this dull, soulless way he made the following extraordinary entry in his journal one morning:

> This morning, close to one of those burned pockets, or fumaroles, which I have before described, I found a roasted rabbit. The little animal was some twelve feet from the fumarole, sitting upright on its haunches and roasted. It looked as if its curiosity had been aroused, and it had been cooked instantly. As decomposition had not set in, it could not have been dead for more than a week.
>
> I wonder if this is a tab on the date of these fumaroles? If so, they must have been burned a few days ago, instead of being of geologic antiquity, as I at first assumed. If recent, they must be of artificial origin. Since they roast a rabbit before frightening it, they must occur with the abruptness of an explosion. Can these splotches be connected with the evil mystery surrounding this expedition? I cannot say. I have no theory whatever.

THAT evening at dinner Pethwick showed this entry to M. Demetriovich. The old Rumanian read it, and his only comment was a nod and a brief ——

"Yes, I had discovered they were of recent origin myself."

Presently he suggested a game of chess to take their minds off the matter before they retired.

"You look strained, Pethwick," the old man said.

The engineer laughed briefly.

"I am strained. I'm jumpy every minute of the day and night."

The old savant considered his friend with concern.

"Wouldn't you better get out of here foı a while, Herbert?"

"What's the use? I could think of nothing else."

"You would feel out of danger."

"I don't feel in danger."

"Yes, you do—all mystery connotes danger. It suggests it to us. That is why mystery is so stimulating and fascinating."

"Do you think we are in danger?"

"I am sure the man who killed Cesare would not hesitate over us."

Standifer, who was seated at the table began to smile in a superior manner at their fears.

Owing to the engineer's nervous condition this irritated Pethwick acutely. However, he said nothing about it, but remarked to M. Demetriovich—

"Tomorrow I am through with my work right around here."

"Then you'll take a rest, as I suggest."

"No, I'll take a pack, walk straight down this valley and find out what is making these fumaroles —and what became of Cesare."

At that moment, in the gathering blue of night, the eastern sky was lighted by the glare of the pseudo-moon. Its pallor poured in through the tent flaps and the shadows of the men's legs streaked the floor.

The mystery brought both the old men to the outside. They stared at the illumination in silence. The light was as noiseless as the aurora. As they watched it, Pethwick heard Standifer laughing inside the tent.

The secretary's idiocy almost snapped the engineer's control. He wanted to knock his empty head. At last the phenomenon died away and left its usual glimmer on the surrounding heights. In a few minutes this vanished and it was full night.

When the men reentered the tent, Standifer still smiled as if he enjoyed some immunity from their mystification and nervousness.

"Well, what's the joke?" asked Pethwick at last.

"The way you fellows go up in the air about this thing."

"You, I suppose, are on solid ground!" exploded Pethwick.

The author said nothing but continued his idiotic smile.

"I admit there are points here and there I don't understand," continued Pethwick after a moment. "No doubt we fail to understand it as thoroughly as you do."

"You do," agreed Standifer with such matter-of-factness the engineer was really surprised.

"What in the devil have you found out?" he asked irritably.

"Oh, the facts, the facts," said Standifer nonchalantly. "I'm a writer, you know, a trained observer; I dive to the bottom of things."

Pethwick stared, then laughed in a chattery fashion——

"Y-Yes, I see you diving to the bottom of this ——"

The old professor, who had been studying the secretary, quietly interrupted—

"What do you know, James?"

The literary light hesitated a moment, then drew a handful of glittering metal out of his pocket and plunked it down on the table.

"I know all about it," he said and grinned in spite of himself.

The men stared. Pablo Pasca paused in his journeys to and from the kitchen tent to stare at the boy and the gold.

"Know all about what?" cut in Pethwick jumpily. "The gold or the mystery?"

"Both."

Suddenly Pablo cried—

"I told you, *señores*, wealth lies where danger is so great!"

"Have you found a gold mine?" asked M. Demetriovich.

"No, I sold one of my books."

"Whom to—when—where—my Lord; who was the sucker?" Pethwick's questions almost exploded out of him.

"I had no idea my book had such a reputation," beamed the author.

"Youngster, if you'll cut the literary twaddle——" quavered Pethwick on edge.

"Well, I had a hunch there must be some very simple explanation of all this skull and cross-bone stuff you fellows were trying to pull. You know that doesn't go on in real life. It's only fiction, that resort of the mentally muddled——"

"Standifer! Spill it—if you know anything!"

"Go on, tell it your own way," encouraged Demetriovich. "You were saying 'mentally muddled.'"

"Sure—yes, well, nothing to it, you know. This life is very simple, once you get the key."

"Lord, doesn't that sound like 'Reindeer in Iceland'!" groaned the engineer.

"What was the light we saw just then, Mr. Standifer?" inquired the savant, who saw that the secretary would never get anywhere unaided.

"A new sort of portable furnace, sir, that extracts and reduces ores on the spot."

"Who runs it?"

"Indians."

"Have you seen any of them?"

"Saw one not three hours ago. Sold him a copy of 'Reindeer in Iceland.'"

Pethwick interrupted the catechism.

"Gave you that much gold for a copy of 'Reindeer in Iceland'! —— for the whole edition of 'Reindeer in Iceland'!"

"Did you enquire about Cesare?" proceeded M. Demetriovich.

"Yes, he's working for them."

"Did you think to ask about the chlorophyll?"

"That's used in a secret process of extracting gold."

"You say the men engaged in such a method of mining are *Indians?"*

"The man I saw was an Indian."

"Did you talk to him in English, Spanish, Quicha? What language?"

The secretary hesitated.

"Well—in English, but I had to explain the language to him. I think he knew it once but had forgotten it."

"A lot of South Americans are educated in the States," observed Pethwick, who by now was listening intently.

"Tell us what happened, Mr. Standifer," requested the Rumanian.

"WELL, today I was about twelve miles down the valley. I had sat down to eat my lunch when I saw an Indian behind a rock staring at me as if his eyes would pop out of his head. I don't mind admitting it gave me a turn, after the way things have been happening around here. On second glance I thought it was Cesare. I was about to yell and ask when the fellow himself yelled at me—

"'Hey, Cesare, is that you?'

"Well, it nearly bowled me over. But I got a grip on my nerves and shouted back, 'No, I'm not Cesare!' And I was about to ask who the fellow was when he took it right out of my mouth and shouted to me, 'Who are you?'

"I told him my name and address, that I was an author and secretary of the De Long Geographical Expedition; then I asked him to come out and let's have a talk.

"The fellow came out all right, walking up to me, looking hard at me. He was an ordinary Indian with a big head and had on clothes about like Cesare's. In fact, you know it is hard to tell Indians apart. As he came up he asked me the very question I had in mind—

"'Do you know Cesare?'

"I said, 'Yes; where is he?'

"He stood looking at me and shook his head.

"I said, 'You don't know,' and he touched his mouth and laughed. Then I guessed that he didn't understand English very well, so I began explaining the language to him.

"He would point at something and say, 'Is that a bird? Is that a stone? Is that a river?' In each case he got it right, but there was always a hesitation, of about a second, perhaps, as if he were thinking like this: 'is that a—river?'"

Both the older men were staring intently at the boy as if they were trying to read something behind his words. Pethwick nodded impatiently.

"I am sure," continued Standifer, "the fellow once knew English and it was coming back to him."

"Undoubtedly," from Pethwick.

"Then he saw the corner of my book in my haversack, for I—I sometimes carry my book around to read when I'm lonely, and he said, 'What is that —'Reindeer in Iceland'?"

"That joggled me so, I said, 'Yes, how the deuce did you know that?'

"Well, at that he almost laughed himself to death and finally he said just about what was in my mind; 'That has a wider reputation than you imagine,' and he added, 'What is it for?'

"'What is what for?' says I.

"'Reindeer in Iceland,' says he.

"'To read,' says I. 'It contains facts,' says I. 'It's not like the rotten fiction you pick up.' And with that my whole spiel that I used to put up to the farmers in New York State when I sold my books from door to door came back to me. I thought what a lark it would be to try to sell a copy to an Indian in the Rio Infiernillo. 'If I do that,' I thought to myself, 'I'll be the star book-agent of both the Americas.' So I began:

"'It's not like the rotten fiction you buy,' says I. 'This volume gives you the truth about reindeer in Iceland; it tells you their food, their strength, their endurance, their value in all the different moneys of the world. It states where are the greatest herds. What reindeer hides are used for. How their meat, milk and cheese taste. How to prepare puddings from their blood. How the bulls fight. Their calls; their love-calls, danger-calls, hunger-calls. How their age may be calculated by the tines on their horns and the rings on their teeth and the set of their tails. In fact, sir,' said I, 'with this little volume in your pocket, it will be impossible for any man, no matter how dishonest he is, to palm off on you an old, decrepit reindeer under the specious representation that he or she is young, agile and tender.

" 'The price of this invaluable compendium puts it within easy reach of one and all. It will prove of enormous practical and educational value to each and any. It makes little difference whether you mean to rear these graceful, docile animals or not; you need this volume, for as a means of intellectual culture it is unsurpassed. It contains facts, nothing but facts. You need it. Do you want it? Are you progressive? It's price is the only small thing about it—only fifty-four cents. Let me put you down.'

"With that, so strong is the force of habit, I whipped out an old envelope to take his order on.

" 'What is fifty-four cents?' he asked, 'Have I got fifty-four cents?'

" 'Just what I was wondering,' says I. 'Turn your pockets wrongside out and I'll see.'

"He turned 'em and spilled a lot of metals on the ground. I saw these pieces of gold and told him they would do. I told him I would give him all five of my volumes, for that is the number I brought on this trip, and I'm sorry now I didn't bring more.

"He just pushed the gold over to me without blinking an eye and we traded. I told him where we were camped and he said tomorrow he would call and get the other four volumes. And, gentlemen, that is all I know."

AT the end of this tale, Standifer leaned back, smiling with pleasure at his sale. The two men sat studying him. At last Pethwick asked—

"You say he knew the title of your book?"

"Yes."

"Was the title showing?"

"No, just a little corner stuck out of the knapsack."

Pethwick considered a moment.

"You at first thought it was Cesare?"

"Yes."

"Did he have a scar on the side of his face?"

"No, I would have noticed that sure. Still his face was painted very thickly. I couldn't see any scar."

"You are sure it wasn't Cesare?"

"Absolutely sure."

Here M. Demetriovich took up what might be called the cross-examination.

"You say he didn't understand English at first—could he read the book you sold him?"

"No, that was the odd part. I had to tell him what the letters were and how they made words; how words made sentences. But he caught on the moment I showed him anything and never forgot at all. I tried him."

M. Demetriovich paused:

"You are sure it was an Indian?"

"Yes."

"But he didn't know the value of gold?"

"Well, I don't know about that," began Standifer.

"Did you say he gave you all that money for five dinky little books!" stormed Pethwick.

"Yes, but that doesn't say he doesn't understand—"

"A gold-miner," interrupted M. Demetriovich, "who is so highly scientific as to employ chlorophyll in a secret process of extracting gold and yet who—doesn't know the value of gold!"

The secretary caressed his glittering pile happily, yawned and slipped it back into his pocket.

"Anyway I wish I had a cartload of those books down here."

Pethwick sat on his stool clutching his knee to his breast, glaring at the author. Finally he gave a nervous laugh—

"I'm glad you've cleared up the mystery, Standifer."

"So am I," returned the secretary genially. "I was getting worried about it myself."

"I shouldn't think it would worry you, Standifer." Pethwick gave another shuddery laugh.

"I'm not bad to worry," agreed the secretary heartily.

The engineer sat moistening his dry lips with his tongue while little shivers played through him.

"By the way," he asked after a moment, "did you think to enquire about those skeletons? Is that—cleared up, too?"

"Yes, I did. He said he put them up there to keep the animals away. He said you never knew what sort of animals were about and he didn't want any in till he was ready. He said he put one of every species he could find because each animal was afraid of its own dead."

M. Demetriovich sat gazing at the boy. A grayness seemed to be gathering over the old man.

"That's a fact," he nodded. "I'd never thought of it before—each animal is afraid of its own dead. No skeleton shocks a human being except the skeleton of a man. I suppose it's true of the rest."

"Anyway, it's all cleared up now, Standifer," repeated the engineer with his chattering laugh. "It is as you say, Standifer; there are no mysteries outside of fiction."

He began laughing, shaking violently. His exclamations grew louder and wilder. M. Demetriovich jumped out of his seat, hurried over to his medicine-chest, fixed up a glass of something and with a trembling hand presented it to the engineer. Pethwick drank some and then the old man took a deep swallow himself.

"What's the matter?" asked the secretary, lifting a happy head.

"It's the reaction," shivered the engineer less violently. "You cleared up the mystery——so suddenly—— Go on to sleep."

The boy dropped back to his pillow and was off instantly after his long walk.

The two older men sat staring at each other across the little table, their nerves calming somewhat under the influence of the sedative.

"Is it a lie," whispered Pethwick after long thought, "to cover the discovery of gold?"

M. Demetriovich shook his head.

"That boy hasn't enough imagination to concoct a fragment of his fantastic tale. The thing happened."

"Then in God's name, what is Cesare going to do to us tomorrow?"

"Cesare would never have given away all that gold," decided the old savant slowly.

"Unless—he means to recoup it all tomorrow."

M. Demetriovich shook his head.

"Cesare might have put on the paint—he could never have thought up such an elaborate mental disguise. That is far beyond him."

The two men brooded. At last the savant hazarded:

"It may be possible that the Bolsheviki have quit using gold. I believe there is a plan to use time-checks down in their socialistic program."

The engineer jumped another speculation, "The old Incans used gold as a common metal—the old Incans—sun-worshipers, who sacrifice living men to their deity——"

The two scientists sat in silence. From the ice-fields high above the chasm of the Rio Infiernillo came a great sighing wind. It breathed in on them out of the blackness; its cold breath chilled their necks, their hands, their wrists; it breathed on their ankles and spread up under their trousers, chilling their knees and loins.

The men shivered.

CHAPTER IV

PETHWICK awoke out of some sort of nightmare about Incan sun-worshipers. He could hear the groans of victims about to be sacrificed and even after he had shuddered awake his sense of impending calamity persisted. He lifted himself on an elbow and stared about the tent. The sun shining straight into his face, no doubt, had caused his fantasy about the sun-worshipers.

He got to a sitting posture, yawning and blinking his eyes. Outside the day was perfectly still. A bird chirped querulously. In the corral he could hear the llamas snuffling. Then he heard repeated the groan that had disturbed him in his sleep. It came from the secretary's cot.

The engineer glanced across, then came fully awake. Instead of the young author, Pethwick saw an old, white-haired man lying in the cot with the back of his head showing past the blankets. The engineer stared at this thing blankly. A suspicion that Demetriovich had changed cots passed through his mind, but a glance showed him the old savant still asleep on his proper bed.

The engineer got up, stepped across and leaned over this uncanny changeling. It took him a full half-minute to recognize, in the drawn face and white hair of the sleeper, the boy Standifer.

A shock went over the engineer. He put his hand on the author's shoulder.

"Standifer!" he shouted. "Standifer!"

As Standifer did not move, Pethwick called to the professor with an edge of horror in his voice.

The old savant sprang up nervously.

"What is it?"

"Here, look at this boy. See what has happened!"

The scientist stared from his cot, rubbed his eyes and peered.

"Is—is that Standifer?"

"Yes."

"What's happened to him?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, professor."

The scientist jabbed his feet into his slippers and came across the tent. He shook the sleeper gently at first, but gradually increased his energy till the cot squeaked and the strange white head bobbed on the pneumatic pillow.

"Standifer! Standifer!"

But the youth lay inert.

He stripped the covers and the underclothes of the young man.

Standifer lay before them naked in the cold morning air; his undeveloped physique looked bluish; then, on the groin of his right leg, Pethwick noticed an inflamed splotch that looked like a severe burn.

M. Demetriovich turned to his medicine-chest and handed Pethwick an ammonia bottle to hold under the boy's nose while he loaded a hypodermic with strychnin solution. A moment later he discharged it into the patient's arm.

A shudder ran through Standifer at the powerful stimulant. His breathing became better and after a bit he opened his eyes. He looked drowsily at the two bending over him and after a minute whispered—

"What's matter?"

"How do you feel?"

"Sleepy. Is it time to get up?"

"Do you ache—hurt?"

The secretary closed his eyes, evidently to take stock of his feelings.

"My head aches. My——my leg burns."

He reached down and touched the inflamed spot.

As the strychnin took firmer hold the boy became alert enough to show surprise at his own state. He eased his sore leg to the floor and sat up on the edge of the cot. Both his companions began a series of questions.

Standifer had no idea what was the matter with him. He had not bruised either his head or his leg. Nothing had happened to him through the night, that he recalled, nor on the preceding day. After a bit, he remembered the sale of his books and drew from under his pillow the gold which he had received.

A thought crossed Pethwick's mind that Pablo Pasca had crept in during the night and had assaulted the sleeper. Demetriovich took the bag and inspected it, smelled of it gingerly. Pethwick watched him with some curiosity.

"How did you bring this home yesterday afternoon, James?" queried the old man.

The secretary thought.

"In my pocket."

"In your right trousers pocket?"

Standifer made a movement to place his right and left sides and said:

"Yes."

"Put on your trousers."

The youth did so, working his sore leg carefully inside.

"Put that gold in your pocket. Does it fall directly over the burn?"

Standifer cringed and got the metal out as quickly as possible.

"I should say so."

M. Demetriovich nodded.

"And you slept with the gold under your pillow last night for safe-keeping?"

"Yes."

"Then that did it." diagnosed the scientist.

"But how can gold—"

"The stuff must be poisoned somehow. I'll see if I can find how."

The savant moved to the table containing his chemicals and test-tubes.

TO Pethwick, the idea of poisoned gold sounded more like the extravagance of the Middle Ages than a reality occurring in the twentieth century. The engineer stood beside the table and watched the professor pursue his reactions for vegetable and mineral poisons. Standifer limped to the engineer's side. In the silver bowl of an alcohol lamp, the boy caught a reflection of himself. He leaned down and looked at the tiny image curiously. At length he asked:

"Pethwick, is there anything the matter with my hair?"

Then Pethwick realized that the boy did not know his hair was white. And he found, to his surprise, that he hated to tell Standifer. He continued watching the experiment as if he did not hear.

Standifer took up the lamp and by holding its bowl close he got a fair view of his head. He gave a faint gasp and looked for a mirror. At that instant Demetriovich took the only mirror on the table to condense a vapor floating out of a tube. The old man began talking quickly to the engineer:

"Pethwick, this is the cleverest destructive stroke that the Bolshevists have ever invented."

"What is it?"

"I still don't know, but they have poisoned this gold. They could probably do the same thing to silver. It makes the circulation of money deadly. It will perhaps cause the precious metals to be discarded as media of circulation."

The engineer looked incredulous.

"It's a fact. Do you recall how the report of ground glass in candies cut down the consumption of confectionery? If a large body of men should persistently poison every metal coin that passes through its hands—who would handle coins? Why, gentlemen," he continued as the enormity of the affair grew on him, "this will upset our whole commercial system. It will demonetize gold. No wonder that scoundrel offered our secretary so much gold for a book or two. He wanted to test his wares."

The old man's hand trembled as he poured a blue liquid from one test-tube to another.

"I am constrained to believe that in this Valley of the Infernal River we are confronted with the greatest malignant genius mankind has ever produced."

"Why should he want to demonetize gold?" interrupted Pethwick.

"It will force mankind to adopt a new standard of value and to use an artificial medium of exchange—'labor-hour checks,' perhaps, whose very installation will do more to socialize the world than any other single innovation."

The two friends stood watching him anxiously. "You can't find what they do it with?"

"Not a trace so far. It seems to defy analysis."

"Notice," observed Pethwick, "your electroscope is discharged."

M. Demetriovich glanced at the gold-leaf electroscope and saw that its tissue leaves were wilted.

Suddenly Standifer interrupted:

"Pethwick, is my hair white? Did that stuff turn my hair white?" He seized the mirror. "Look! Look!" he cried out of nervous shock and a profoundly wounded vanity.

The engineer turned with genuine sympathy for the author, but in turning he saw a man standing in the entrance watching the excitement with a slight smile.

The engineer paused abruptly, staring.

The stranger was a medium-sized Indian with an abnormally developed head and a thickly painted face. He wore the usual shirt and trousers of a *cholo* and for some reason gave Pethwick a strong impression of Cesare Ruano. Why he resembled Cesare, Pethwick could not state, even after he had inspected him closely. To judge from the Indian's faintly ironic expression, he must have been observing the scientists for several minutes.

M. Demetriovich first regained his self-possession.

"Are you the man who gave my boy this gold?" he asked sharply, indicating the metal with which he was experimenting.

The painted man looked at the heap.

"I gave a boy some gold for some books," he admitted.

"Well, that's the gold all right," snapped Pethwick.

"Did you know the gold you gave him was poisoned?" proceeded the savant severely.

"Poisoned? How was it poisoned?"

"That is for you to tell us."

"I don't know in the least. What effect did it have?"

The man's tones were completely casual, without fear, regret, or chagrin. "You see for yourself what it did."

The stranger looked at Standifer in astonishment and presently ejaculated:

"Is that the same boy?"

"You see you nearly killed him," stated the scientist grimly.

"It was quite accidental; I don't understand it myself. Let me look at his trouble."

He walked over with more curiosity than regret in his manner.

Pethwick watched the fellow with a sharp and extraordinary dislike. It was so sharp that it drove out of his mind the amazing fact of finding this sort of person in such a desolate valley.

Standifer exhibited the burn. The stranger looked at it, touched a spot here and there and finally said, more with the air of an instructor lecturing his inferiors than with that of an Indian talking to white men:

"This is the effect of a metal which I carried with the gold. A metal—I don't know what you call it in your language—possibly you may never have heard of it. Here is some."

He reached in his pocket and drew out a piece of silvery metal as large as a double eagle and dropped it on the table before M. Demetriovich.

The old savant glanced at the metal, then looked more carefully.

"It's radium," he said in a puzzled voice. "It's the largest piece of radium I ever saw—it's the only piece of pure metallic radium I ever saw. It—it's worth quite a fortune—and owned by an Indian!"

Here M. Demetriovich breached his invariably good manners by staring blankly at his guest.

"So you are acquainted with it?" observed the stranger with interest.

"Not in its metallic form. I have extracted its bromides myself. And I've seen radium burns before. I might have known it was a radium burn, but I never dreamed of that metal."

"But that was gold that burned me," complained Standifer.

"That's true," agreed M. Demetriovich, "but, you see, the emanations of radium have the power of settling on any object and producing all the effects of radium itself. The gentleman carried those lumps of gold in his pockets along with about two million dollars' worth of radium." The old savant laughed briefly at the eeriness of the situation. "The gold became charged with radium, burned your leg and whitened your hair. It also affected my electrostat."

THE three men turned to the stranger, who apparently carried fortunes of various metals jingling loose in his pocket.

"Sir," began the savant, "we must apologize to you for our unjust suspicions."

"Do you mean your suspicions were incorrect?" queried the red man.

"I mean," said the old savant with dignity, for this was no way to take an apology, "that we were morally culpable in attributing to you criminal motives without waiting for conclusive evidence."

The stranger smiled at this long sentence.

"I can understand your idea without your speaking each word of it. But the idea itself is very strange." He stroked his chin and some paint rubbed off on his fingers, showing a lighter yellowish skin beneath. Then he laughed. "If you should apologize for every incorrect idea you maintain, gentlemen, I should think your lives would be one long apology."

The superciliousness, the careless disdain in this observation, accented Pethwick's antipathy to the man.

At that moment the fellow asked—

"Do all your species live in cloth shelters such as these?"

Standifer, who seemed more kindly disposed toward the stranger than the others, explained that tents were temporary shelters and that houses were permanent.

The newcomer continued his smiling scrutiny of everything and at last asked:

"Can't you gentlemen even communicate with each other without using words and sentences?"

He paused then, as if to simplify what he had said, and went on—

"Suppose you, Mr. Pethwick, desire to communicate with Mr.——" he made a gesture toward the scientist and added——"Mr. Demetriovich, would you be forced to articulate every word in the sentence?"

"How did you come to know my name?" asked the engineer, surprised. "Have we met before?"

The stranger laughed heartily. "I am sure we have not. I see you desire my name. Well, I have a number. In my country the citizens are numbered. I am sure when your own countries become densely populated, you, too, will adopt a numerical nomenclature."

"What is your number?" asked Standifer, quite astonished at this, as indeed were his companions.

"1753-12,657,109-654-3."

The secretary laughed.

"It sounds like a cross between a combination lock and a football game. Where do you come from, Mr.—Mr. Three?"

The painted man nodded down the valley casually.

"The name of my country is One, or First," he smiled. "Of course that is a very ancient and unscientific name, but notation must begin somewhere, and it usually begins at home. Now I dare say each one of you lives in a country called One—no, I see I am wrong." Then he repeated in a lower tone, "America—Rumania—Peru—very pretty names but unscientific."

By this time Mr. Three's remarkable feat of calling the men's names and then calling the countries of their birth made the explorers realize that they had encountered an amazing man indeed.

"Do you read our thoughts before we speak?" cried Standifer.

Mr. Three nodded easily.

"Certainly; without that all study of the lower animals would be a mere cataloguing of actions and habits."

Pethwick wondered if the fellow meant a very delicate insult to begin talking about the study of "lower animals" so promptly when the conversation naturally turned on himself and his companions. He said nothing, but Mr. Three smiled.

But M. Demetriovich was utterly charmed with the vistas of investigation the man's suggestion opened to him.

"Why, that would be wonderful, would it not!" he cried.

"Certainly, without mind-reading comparative psychology is impossible."

"We have professional mind-readers," cried M. Demetriovich with enthusiasm. "I wonder why the psychologists have never thought to have one try to read the minds—say of the higher simians!"

Mr. Three seemed to find all of this conversation funny, for he laughed again. But his words were quite serious.

"Besides, this 'mentage,' as we call mind-reading, enables one to converse with every other creature, just as I am talking to you. I take your language forms right out of your own minds and use them.

If the creature has no language at all, you still receive its impressions."

BY this time even Pethwick, who disliked the fellow almost to the point of hatred, realized that the stranger was wonderful indeed. The engineer decided Mr. Three came from some unknown country, which, he reluctantly admitted to himself, seemed to be more highly cultured than England or America. So, by accepting these facts, Pethwick, in a way, prepared himself not to be too surprised at anything.

"Do all your countrymen understand 'mentage' or mind-language?" enquired the engineer.

"It is our national mode of communication. I observe you move your hands when you talk—gestures, you call it. In One, we speak a word now and then to accent our thoughts—verbal gestures. Some of our population, who are nervous, sometimes speak several words, or even complete sentences. Often it is an affectation, unless, of course," he added politely as if to exempt his companions, "their minds are not strong enough to converse without words.

"On the other hand, a few well-placed words make speeches, and especially orations, very impressive. Still, some of our greatest orators never utter a sound. But I consider this too much repression, in fact rather an academic thing to do. What you would call a —a—a highbrow. Thank you, Mr. Standifer, for thinking me the term."

"It would be a great saving of time," mused Pethwick.

"Yes, indeed; in One, a person can present a whole thought, or a whole series of thoughts, in a single flash of the brain, if the thinker's brain is sufficiently strong. It is almost instantaneous."

Standifer smiled blissfully.

"Think of instantaneous sermons. Let's get to that place!"

Pethwick and the professor did not share in Standifer's badinage but sat amazed at this being whose name was a number. The engineer realized the futility of all the questions he could ask. Turn the idea about. Suppose Mr. Three should ask Pethwick to explain American civilization in a casual talk. It would be impossible. So it was impossible for Mr. Three to give Mr. Pethwick much idea of the land of One.

Mr. Demetriovich took up the questioning:

"Have you been using radium for a long time, Mr. Three?"

"For centuries. We are in the midst of a Radium Age. It was developed out of the Uranium Age. And that out of the Aluminum Age. All this arose out of a prehistoric Steel Age, a very heavy clumsy metal, I have heard archaeologists say."

"You don't mean your mechanical appliances are made out of radium?"

"No, radium is our source of power. It has changed our mechanics from molecular mechanics to atomic mechanics. The first men of One could utilize only molecular energy, such as steam and gasolene. With the aid of radium, we soon developed the enormous force that lies concentrated in the atom. This gives my countrymen unlimited power. It can be derived from any sort of matter, because all matter is composed of atoms and our force is generated through the destruction of atoms."

All this time Mr. Three's voice was growing weaker and weaker until finally he said—

"You will have to excuse me from any further conversation, gentlemen; my throat is not accustomed to much talking."

He tapped it with an apologetic smile. As he did so, he glanced about and his eyes lit on the chess-board and men which Pethwick and M. Demetriovich had been using the previous evening.

"What is that?"

"A game."

"Who plays it? Ah, M. Demetriovich and Mr. Pethwick. I would not object to a party if you feel disposed."

"Professor and I will try a consultation game against you," suggested Pethwick, moving a stool over to the table.

"I don't understand the game, but if you will just think how the pieces are moved," requested the mind-reader, "I dare say I will soon learn."

The engineer framed the demonstration in his mind and Mr. Three nodded.

"I see. It seems to be a sort of rudimentary stage of a game we call 'cube' in First. However, 'cube' is an entirely mental game, although young children are given material boards and pieces to assist them in focusing their attention.

"'Cube' has eight boards such as this, superimposed upon one another. Each board has thirty-two pieces on it, thus giving two-hundred and fifty-six pieces in all, each player controlling one hundred and twenty-eight. All the major pieces can move up or down, forward or backward, but the pawns can only advance, or go higher. As no real boards are used, the whole play must be kept in mind. The game becomes a contest of intricacy, that is, until one player grows confused, makes an incoherent move and is checkmated. It is a very pleasant amusement for persons who have nothing more serious to think about."

"I have seen mental chess-players in America," observed Standifer, "but they use only one board. I suppose more would complicate it. I don't play myself."

The chess-players made no answer to this remark, but set up the men. Mr. Three defeated the scientists' combined skill in a game of ten moves.

AS this extraordinary party was brought to a conclusion, Pablo Pasca entered the tent with breakfast on a tray. When the thief saw the guest, he almost dropped the food, but after a moment came in and placed the dishes on the table. As he did so, he looked meaningly at Pethwick, nodded faintly and retired.

The engineer excused himself and followed the Indian. He found Pablo in the kitchen tent, shaken out of his ordinary stoicism.

"Do you know who he is, *señor?*" he asked in a low voice.

"His name is Three," said Pethwick, involuntarily guarding his own tone.

"No, I mean, do you know he is the man who murdered Cesare Ruano?" asked the thief earnestly.

The engineer nodded.

"I'd thought of that. How do you know he did?"

"How! *Dios Mio*—everything the man has on is Cesare's. Cesare's clothes! Cesare's shoes! On his finger is Cesare's ring—the ring Cesare was saving to be garroted in!"

"I thought somehow he resembled Cesare," nodded Pethwick, "and I knew it was not his face."

"*Ciertamente,* not Cesare, but his murderer," aspirated Pablo excitedly. "I saw this fellow behind this very boulder! This same fellow!"

Pethwick nodded in the sunlight, unaware that Pablo expected him to do anything. Indeed, the engineer was glad he had come out of the tent. Mr. Three's intelligence was oppressive. So now he stood breathing deeply, as if from some struggle. The cliffs, the sunshine, the river, the savor of the kitchen, almost made him doubt the existence in his tent of such a personage as Mr. Three from the Land of One. Where in Heaven's name was that land? Did there flourish over behind the Andes somewhere an unknown race of extraordinary arts and sciences who called themselves the First?

And there recurred to him his fancy that if such a nation existed, it must be an offshoot of the old Incan race. Perhaps fugitives flying before the old *conquistadores* found a haven in some spot and there had built up the most advanced civilization upon the face of the earth. The thought was utterly fantastic, and yet it was the only explanation of Mr. Three sitting there in the tent.

"Well?" said Pablo interrogatively.

The engineer came out of his reverie.

"Is that all you wanted to tell me?"

"All? Isn't that enough?"

"Oh, yes."

"Aren't you going to do anything?" demanded Pablo. "He is an Indian. I thought when Indians killed any one the white men garroted them. *Qwk!* Like that!" He pinched his throat and made a disagreeable sound.

"What am I to do?" inquired Pethwick blankly.

"Blessed Virgin! Does not the white man's law work in the Valley de Rio Infiernillo? I knock an old man on the head and barely save my neck. This *cholo* kills my good *camarada,* wears his clothes, steals the very ring Cesare meant to be garroted in, what happens to him? Why, he sits at the table with white men and plays! *Ehue!* A fine justice!"

The engineer hardly knew how to answer this. He stood looking at Pablo rather blankly. He felt sure an attempt to arrest Mr. Three would prove perilous indeed. On the other hand, Pablo's attitude demanded that Pethwick should act.

Isolated like this, Pethwick was the lone representative of the great Anglo-Saxon convention of justice. It is a strange convention that polices every clime and every tongue. Red, brown, black and yellow men refrain from violence because the white man says:

"Thou shalt not kill!"

Wherever a single unit of the white race is placed, that law inheres in him. Men of all colors come to him and say: "Murder has been done; now what will you do?"

And he must act.

He must deal out that strange Anglo-Saxon convention called justice, or he must die in the attempt.

That is what the white race means; it is what civilization means. It is not any one white man who has this power of judging and punishing; it is any white man. They are the knight-errants of the earth. Each one must fight, sit in judgment and administer justice to the best of his ability and conscience, so help him God.

It is the most amazing hegemony on the face of the earth, when one comes to think of it—and the most universally accepted.

Now Pablo was asking Pethwick an account of his stewardship.

Certainly the engineer did not think of the problem in just those terms. He was not conscious of his racial instinct. He thought, in rather loose American fashion, that since Pablo had put it up to him like this he would have to do something.

The Zambo began again.

"Look at what I did. I only knocked an old man on the head—"

Pethwick interrupted with a gesture:

"Pablo, get those handcuffs you and Cesare used to wear and bring 'em to the tent."

"*Si, señor,*" hissed the half-breed gratefully.

Pethwick turned back toward the tent with thorough distaste for his commission. As he entered, Mr. Three glanced up with quizzical eyes and it suddenly flashed on the engineer with a sense of embarrassment that the man from One already knew what was in his thoughts.

THIS was soon proved. Mr. Three nodded his head smilingly.

"Yes," he said, "Pablo is quite right. Here is the ring."

He held up a hand and displayed an old silver ring engraved in the form of a snake.

M. Demetriovich glanced up at this extraordinary monologue.

"Then you did kill Cesare Ruano?" exclaimed the engineer.

Mr. Three paused for a moment, then answered:

"Yes, I did. There is no use going through a long catechism. I may also add, I knew the emanations of radium would have some effect on the boy, Standifer, but I did not know what."

The old savant stared at the man from One.

"Be careful what you say, Mr. Three. Your confession will place you in jeopardy of the law."

"Then you maintain laws in this country," observed Mr. Three. "What will be the nature of the instruction you will give me?"

"No instruction," said Pethwick; "punishment."

"A very antiquated custom. I should think anyone could see that criminals need instruction."

At that moment Pablo appeared in the entrance with the manacles.

"This is hardly the time to enter into an abstract discussion of punishment, Mr. Three," observed Pethwick brusquely. He held the manacles a moment a little self-consciously, then said, "You may consider yourself under arrest."

To Pethwick's surprise, the man from One offered no resistance, but peaceably allowed himself to be chained to the chair in which he sat. He watched the procedure with faintly amused expression and even leaned over to observe how the anklets were adjusted to his legs.

A certain air of politeness about the Incan at last constrained Pethwick to say:

"You understand, Mr. Three, we are forced to do this—it is the law."

"And you rather dislike me anyway, do you not, Mr. Pethwick?" added Three genially.

The engineer flushed, but kept his eyes steadily on Mr. Three's.

"I dislike you, but I dislike to do this more."

After the shackling the captors stood undecidedly. So they had captured the murderer of Cesare Ruano.

"We'll have to carry him before a magistrate," pondered M. Demetriovich. "It's very annoying."

"M. Demetriovich," said Mr. Three, still smiling in his chains, "you have studied physiology?

"Yes."

"And perhaps vivisection?"

"Certainly."

"Then why all this disturbance about killing a lower animal for scientific ends?"

The old Rumanian looked at Mr. Three steadfastly. "I cannot accept your point, Mr. Three. We are all human beings together, even if Cesare Ruano did not have the culture—"

The rather pointless proceedings were interrupted by a burst of snorting and braying from the corral. Pethwick hurried outside, for the pack animals were really of more importance than the prisoner. The engineer got out just in time to see Pablo go at full speed toward the enclosure. The Indian had a repeating rifle and no doubt feared the attack of a puma or jaguar.

On Pethwick's heels came both M. Demetriovich and the white-haired secretary. The valley was strewn with boulders big and little and the men had difficulty in running over broken ground. From afar off Pethwick saw that the down-river side of the corral had been knocked down, and all the llamas and mules came storming out, flying down toward the camp as if the fiends pursued them.

Pablo fired his rifle in the air in an effort to turn them. As he did so, the Zambo reeled as if he had received a mighty but invisible blow. Mules and llamas plunged straight past their staggering master and for a moment Pethwick was afraid they would run him down.

Next moment the engineer heard the secretary and the professor shouting at the top of their voices. He looked around and saw the comb of his tent on fire.

Thought of his prisoner likely to burn up, sent Pethwick sprinting breathless toward the tent. As the flames rushed over the oiled canvas Pethwick jerked up the ground-pins of the rear wall and shoved under.

Mr. Three still sat in the chair with arms and legs bound to the posts. He slumped queerly. His hat dropped down on his shirt. Half suffocated, the engineer grabbed up chair, manacles, man and all and rushed into the open.

Once outside, he dropped his burden and began to slap at the fire on his own clothes. The other men began to put out the fire on Mr. Three's garments. At their strokes the garments collapsed.

Inside Cesare Ruano's clothes was an empty human skin cut off at the neck. M. Demetriovich drew it out of the burning rags. It had a cicatrice across its breast from nipple to nipple. It had bullet wounds in legs and buttocks. It tallied exactly with the police description of the marks on the skin of Cesare Ruano.

With colorless faces the men stood studying the ghastly relic of the murderer in the brilliant sunshine.

The pack-animals were just disappearing down the river valley. A few remaining shreds of cloth burned where their tent once stood. About them the sinister landscape lay empty.

CHAPTER V

PROF. DEMETRIOVICH held up the gruesome relic.

"Gentlemen," he stated in his matter-of-fact voice, "somebody—something has been stalking us masked in this."

"But why masked?" Standifer's voice was tinged with horror.

"He was stalking us in a human skin, exactly as a hunter stalks a deer in a deer robe," returned M. Demetriovich.

"Then wasn't he a human being?" gasped the secretary.

"It certainly was the devil," gasped Pablo Pasca with a putty face. "The prefect told us not to come here."

"He knows he is a human being," accented Pethwick irritably, "but he doubts if we are. Did you notice his manner? Did you observe the supercilious, egotistical, conceited air of everything he did or said? He put us down as Darwin's connecting link. We are animals to him. He puts on one of our skins to hunt us down. Otherwise, he was afraid we would go scampering off from him like rabbits."

"Then he is a fool if he thought white men are animals," declared Pablo angrily.

"Well, he's not exactly a fool either," admitted Pethwick grudgingly, "but every single thing he said was a knock at us. I never heard—" The engineer's angry voice trailed off into angry silence.

The party stood puzzling over the extraordinary tactics of the man from One. As they buffeted the problem in their brains, a rabbit dashed almost under their feet bound down the valley. They paid no attention to it.

"I'll give you my guess," offered Pethwick. "I still believe we have encountered one of the ancient Incans. In Prescott's account of them, you notice the highest arts of civilization mingled with the grossest barbarities. A custom of wearing an enemy's skin may have grown up among them, just as our North American Indians used to take scalps. No doubt this fellow was spying on our number. I expect him to return soon with a band and attempt our capture."

"What a curious fate for the DeLong Geographical Expedition," mused the white-haired young secretary.

"Still," objected M. Demetriovich, "it might be a Bolshevist method of spreading terror."

"So, professor, you don't believe after all he put on Cesare's skin to stalk us?" queried Standifer.

"James, I don't know what to think," admitted the savant.

"The whole thing fits in better with my Incan theory," pressed the engineer. "The half-civilized Indians around here, like Pablo and Cesare, could very easily be afraid of some highly developed branch of the Incans, especially if the Incans were seeking victims to sacrifice to the sun. Under such circumstances it might be necessary to slip on the hide of a half-breed to get near the others."

"It would also explain why that man ambushed our party when we entered the valley," added the secretary.

"Thanks, Standifer, for helping me out," said Pethwick. "It would also show why the peons around here call this the Rio Infiernillo and give it such a wide berth."

M. Demetriovich pulled his chin.

"Your theory seems to hang together right now," he admitted. "If you are on the right track, we will have a marvel to report—if we ever get back."

"Then, too," went on Pethwick, encouraged, "since the prefect warned us against the valley, it suggests to me there has been something sinister here for years—long before Bolshevism became a power."

"These are queer theories," laughed Standifer, "one going to the extremely ancient and the other to the extremely modern."

During the latter part of this discussion, an atok, a sort of huge native rodent, slithered down the valley past the scientists, dodging from one boulder to another. Now a Peruvian fox whisked past.

The unusual animals passing within a few minutes proved sufficient to draw Pethwick's attention from the subject under discussion. The engineer looked up the stony stretch and a surprising sight filled his eyes.

The whole valley worked with glimpses of flying animals. Rats, hares, civets, what not, darted here and there from covert to covert. Along the edge of the river slunk a panther, making cat-like rushes between hiding-places. The shrill whistle of three frightened deer sounded down the valley.

It seemed as if a wave of fear were depopulating the whole Rio Infiernillo. All the engineer could see was innumerable furtive dodgings. From the dull surface of the river arose a loon, screaming, and it boomed down stream with fear-struck speed. Only one animal fled in the open, a huge black bear with a white muzzle, the ucumari. He was king of the Andes, as the grizzly reigns in the Rockies. He lunged down the middle of the cañon, taking the whole Infernal Valley for his course. He was afraid of nothing in the Sierras—except what was behind him.

The scientists hurried out from in front of the brute and let him lunge by unchallenged. They stared up the burnt valley, marveling at this exodus of animals.

Presently, far away against the blackish stones, Pethwick descried what seemed to be yellow fleas hopping among the boulders.

"That must be what made our pack-animals break loose!" cried the engineer.

"Wonder what they are?" from the author.

"I say it's the devil making a drive," answered Pablo, crossing himself with fervor.

The animals kept darting past. The distant fleas grew into bugs, then into some sort of animals and at last were defined against the charnel gulch as human beings.

"Jumping Jehosophat!" cried Standifer. "They are those Incans you were talking about, Pethwick. Scores of 'em! They've come for us!"

The secretary stepped around behind a large boulder that hid everything except his head.

Others of the expedition followed suit, hardly knowing what to believe.

The approaching party were yellow men. Each one carried something in his hand that flashed like metal. They leaped from boulder to boulder in their chase with amazing activity. The very vicuñas themselves that skittered along the craggy sides of the valley did not exhibit a greater agility.

Pablo Pasca, notwithstanding his belief that all this was a great drive of the devil, nevertheless became excited at the passing game. As one speckled deer came shimmering down through the diamond-like sunshine, Pablo determined to beat Satan out of one carcass, so he leveled his rifle for a shot. The author saw it and put his fingers to his ears to dull the report.

At that moment a voice quite close to the party broke the silence with:

"Don't shoot. There must be no holes in the skins."

The word "skins" brought the party around with a start. They were nervous on the topic. The secretary, however, still stood with his fingers in his ears, watching deer.

On top of a large boulder, still wearing his look of condescension and amusement, sat the recent prisoner of the expedition, Mr. Three. Since he had flung off Cesare's clothes and skin, the weird creature was without apparel and sat naked in the cold vivid sunshine, his body of a clear yellowish complexion and his large head still painted a coppery red.

IT was the most grotesque combination Pethwick could have imagined, but Mr. Three maintained a perfect composure, dignity—and condescension. His painted face had the faintly amused expression of a man watching the antics of, say, some pet goats.

The fellow's body suggested to Pethwick a ripe pear or yellow peach. His hands and feet were disagreeably small—sure sign of ancient and aristocratic blood. He must have slipped right through the manacles the moment his captors turned their backs. In one hand he held a small metallic rod.

Pethwick stared at the remarkable transformation and finally blurted out:

"Did you break loose from the handcuffs and set fire to our tent?"

"The fire was quite accidental," assured the man from One. "I did it with this focusing-rod when I got rid of your quaint old manacles."

"Focusing-rod," caught up Standifer, for, notwithstanding all he had suffered at the hands of Mr. Three, the pride of a flattered author and the remarkable sale of his books left him with a kindly feeling in his heart for the fellow.

"Yes, focusing-rod."

"What does it focus?"

"Wireless power."

"We have transmission of wireless power in America," observed the Professor, "but that is certainly the most compact terminal I ever saw."

Mr. Three glanced at the rod in his hand.

"Oh, yes, this is one of the primitive instruments. I fancy this came into use among thinking creatures along with fire, the keystone of the arch and the old-fashioned seventy-two-mile gun. They were important additions to human knowledge, but their discoverers and the dates of their discovery are lost in prehistoric eras."

For a moment Mr. Three sat pensively in the sunshine, his mind dwelling on that misty time in the land of One when some unrecorded genius found out how to focus wireless power with a little metal rod. No doubt to this mysterious man the principle of the rod appeared so simple that any rational creature would know it.

Presently he came out of his reverie and waved his focusing bar down the valley.

"You men," he directed, "will follow the rest of the quarry down the river—everything must go!"

For a moment the scientists stared at him, not understanding.

"What is it?" inquired Standifer.

"Follow the quarry down the valley and be quick about it," snapped the yellow man brusquely.

An indignant flush swept over Pethwick.

"You must be crazy, Three. We'll do as we please."

"Why should we go?" inquired Demetriovich with his academic suavity.

Mr. Three tapped impatiently with his rod on the boulder.

"So our commander can select specimens to carry to One," he explained briefly.

"Oh, I see," cried Pethwick, somewhat mollified. "He wants us to help him select the animals, as we are naturalists."

For once in their intercourse, Mr. Three showed genuine surprise. He sprang to his feet and stared at them.

"You help him select! You!" The gnome broke into the most insulting of laughter. "You bunch of idiots, he is going to select one of you as a specimen to carry to One!" Here he threw off his brief tolerance of opposition and shouted, "Forward, march! I don't want to have to use force!"

For a moment the men stood almost paralyzed with amazement. Mr. Three evidently read the mental state, for he put a hand over his mouth to conceal his grin and to maintain his air of grim authority.

Pethwick first organized active resistance. Pablo Pasca still stood with his rifle at ready. Pethwick whispered sharply to the Indian:

"Get him!"

Almost by reflex action, the Zambo swung his rifle on Mr. Three and fired.

At the same moment Pablo staggered backward as if he had received a powerful blow out of the air. His rifle clattered to the stones. At the same instant Pethwick felt a sensation like a strong electric shock. Standifer grunted and clapped a hand to his already wounded leg.

At this act of war the party of scientists threw themselves flat behind boulders. Pethwick adjusted his rifle with hands shaking from his shock and then peered around his shelter for a glimpse of Mr. Three. He saw the yellow man still standing on the boulder. The engineer eased his rifle around unsteadily. The head of the gun wavered about the big painted head. With a determined effort the engineer settled it on his target. He was just squeezing the trigger when tingling knots rushed through his arms, legs and body, stiffening them, flashing fire in his brain, beating him with a thousand prickly hammers. It was an electric shock. He flattened under it, squirming and twisting.

The moment his thought of opposition vanished in pain the shock ceased.

All three white men and the Indian lay motionless. The only sound Pethwick could hear was an occasional groan from Standifer and the faint patter of passing animals.

A ray of sardonic amusement fluttered through the engineer's dizzy brain—the DeLong Geographical Expedition captured as a curious species of lower animals.

Sudden hearty laughter from the nearby boulder told the Engineer that Mr. Three had caught the jest and was enjoying it. Pethwick flushed angrily.

AFTER this convincing contest with the focusing-rod the expedition abandoned resistance and surrendered themselves as prisoners of war, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say prisoners of science.

Although Pablo had shot at Mr. Three, the strange being regarded it no more than if a cat had scratched at him. Instead of being angry, he really tried to comfort the men. He told them only one of their number would be taken as a specimen to the land of One; the person chosen would be retained alive and, if he proved tractable, he would undoubtedly be allowed to run at large within certain limits and might be taught simple tricks wherewith to amuse the visitors at the zoo; such as playing a simple game of chess on one board.

This may or may not have been a sarcastic fling at the feeble game of chess which Pethwick had just played; at any rate the thought of playing endless games of chess through the bars of a zoological cage filled the engineer with nausea. No doubt on one side of him would be a monkey begging for peanuts and on the other a surly orang. For Pethwick did not doubt the specimen selected would be classed among the simians.

As they walked along the engineer thought up a new line of defense. He began to threaten Mr. Three with the American Army and Navy. He told the yellow man this expedition was American and their capture would be no small affair. They were a famous scientific body. They would be missed. Their abduction would mean a war between the land of One and the whole League of Nations.

At this Mr. Three interrupted incredulously:

"Do you creatures really compose a scientific body?"

Pethwick was so cut by the remark that he stopped talking and walked along in silence.

The professor plied his captor with many questions. He discovered that the men from One had a portable furnace and were extracting radium from the outcrop of pitchblende in the valley. The mysterious burned places which Pethwick had noted in his journal were spots where the furnace had been operated. The strange lights which the expedition had seen on several occasions were the men moving the furnace from one place to another. Mr. Three explained that they always moved the furnace at night; it was difficult to do this during the day because the sun's rays created an etheric storm.

The yellow man's conversation entertained the white men notwithstanding their uncertain fate. Pablo Pasca, however, trembled on the verge of collapse. He knew he was in the hands of the imps of Satan. Now and then Pethwick heard him groan.

"Oh, Mother of Heaven! Oh, if I could get back to the garrote! Poor Cesare Ruano, in torment without his skin—or the ring he meant to be garroted in!"

Animals still rushed past the party and behind them came the yellow beaters, scaring up the game.

It was useless for anything to hide from these terrible men with their focusing-rods. Evidently they could sense an animal's fright and locate it as an ordinary man can locate a sound. As soon as they found something in a covert, a slight electric shock sent it headlong after the other animals.

For the first time in his life Pethwick felt some kinship for the lower animals. He, too, was in the *battue*, one with the foxes and rabbits that fluttered past him. For ages man had slaughtered the lower animals exactly as the men from One were doing now.

And just as man had annihilated the bison, the apteryx, the dodo, so no doubt this new and more powerful race from One would exterminate man and his cities, his works of art and his sciences. The vision of a charnel world painted itself on his depressed imagination—a wiping out of existing races and a repeopling by these yellow Incans. Compared to such such a conflict the late world war would be trivial.

AMID the day-dream of Armageddon, the engineer heard M. Demetriovich ejaculate to himself:

"So it is a German Bolshevist undertaking after all. There's a Zeppelin!"

Pethwick looked up suddenly. The prisoners had rounded a turn in the valley. Not more than three hundred yards distant rose an enormous structure in the shape of a Zeppelin. It required a second glance to observe this fact, as the huge creation stood on its end instead of lying horizontal as do the ordinary flying-ships.

Instead of being made of cloth, this Zeppelin had a skin of white metal, no doubt aluminum. Indeed, for the first time a dirigible had been constructed that had the staunchness and air-worthiness that deserved the name ship. This was no mere bubble of varnished cloth.

It was enormous. It rose some seven hundred and fifty feet high, an amazing skyscraper of silver whose fulgor was enhanced by the dark and melancholy background of the Infernal Valley.

The immense vessel rested on its stern which tapered down to perhaps four feet in diameter. It was shored up with long metal rods anchored in the earth. The rods, some hundred feet long, were inserted in the airship just where its great barrel began to taper to its stern.

Five hundred feet up the side of the cylinder Pethwick noticed the controlling planes, which looked exceedingly small for the vast bulk they were designed to pilot. When the engineer pointed these out to the professor, M. Demetriovich seemed surprised.

"Do you realize, Pethwick, what their small size indicates? The speed of this ship through the air must be prodigious if these tiny controls grip the air with sufficient leverage to direct this monster."

Then the old scientist went on to commend the novel idea of landing the dirigible on her stern. It did away with wide maneuvering to gain altitude. This aluminum dirigible could drop into a hole slightly larger than her own diameter and launch herself out of it straight at the sky. It was an admirable stroke.

Workmen dotted the vessel's side, scrubbing the bright skin as assiduously as a crew painting a man-of-war. Pethwick could distinguish this scrubbing force up for two or three hundred feet. Beyond that he caught only glimmers of moving dots amid the reflections of the sun.

The organization of the crew seemed cast along military lines. Small squads of men or soldiers marched in exact ranks and files over the valley to gather up the animals stunned by the focusing-rods.

At first Pethwick had not observed these animals, but a more careful look showed him a number of specimens that had been struck down as they passed the ship. The big-headed yellow men were collecting these in cages, evidently for exhibition purposes when they returned to the extraordinary land from which they came. The slaughter had not been wasteful. Only one member of each species had been taken.

The yellow men worked at top speed and were plainly under the continual barked orders of soldiery, but oddly enough not a sound was heard. The whole control was mental. The silence gave Pethwick the strange impression that he was looking at a gigantic cinema.

A MOVEMENT behind the white men caused them to look around. A file of yellow soldiers was moving toward the dirigible, coming from the direction of their burned camp up the valley. These men bore the mounted skeletons which the DeLong Geographical Expedition had observed when they first entered the strange valley of the Rio Infiernillo.

The removal of these objects suggested to Pethwick that the men from One and their super-dirigible would soon sail from the valley. A great curiosity to see the departure seized the engineer.

He looked for the big driving propellers which he thought must draw the ship, but he could see none.

At that moment four soldiers with a large metal cage approached the DeLong Geographical party. At the same time on one of the upper rounds of the airship, some seventy-five feet above the base, appeared a yellow man with a peculiar scintillating star fixed to his big yellow head. The personage looked directly toward the explorers but said nothing.

When he looked Mr. Three drew himself up and saluted in military fashion.

Then, evidently for the benefit of his captors, Mr. Three answered aloud the mental questions which his superior must have put to him. Here are the words of the one-sided conversation:

"Yes, sir."

"No, sir."

"Ordinary ruby-blooded mammals, sir, with intelligence somewhat higher than monkeys, sir.

"They communicate their simple thoughts exactly as monkeys do, sir—by chattering.

"They are absolutely insensible to all mental vibrations, sir, more completely so than the four-legged animals.

"I would suggest you take all five. They will prove very amusing, sir, in the national zoo. Their attempts to deceive each other and to deceive even me, sir, are as good as a farce. I believe you will find them much more humorous than chimpanzees or the ordinary monkeys, sir.

"Sorry you can't. In that case I suggest we take the brown one. His color is the nearest human. Then, too, he has the best physique. None of them have any minds to speak of.

"Very well, sir."

Here Mr. Three saluted stiffly and directed the four workmen with the cage toward Pablo Pasca.

As the laborers lowered their cage and started for the half-breed Pablo's eyes almost started from his head. He whirled to run, but seemed to realize the hopelessness of trying to escape from the amazing agility of the men from One. Next moment he whipped out a knife and dashed into the midst of his assailants, slashing and stabbing like one possessed.

But the soldiers of One had feline agility. They dodged, whipped under his blows like game-cocks. One leaped straight over the heads of his comrades and landed headlong on the Zambo. It was an unfortunate leap. Pablo's blade caught him in the shoulder and a dark liquid spurted out.

In the instant of withdrawing the blade, the yellow men seized the half-breed's arms and legs. They went down with the Zambo in a struggling pile. Pablo kicked, bit, twisted his knife with a wrist movement, trying to cut something. But the yellow men worked swiftly and methodically.

"Quick!" commanded Mr. Three. "We must start in four minutes!" Then in answer to some question the yellow soldiers thought to him, "I can't use my focusing-rod. It might destroy what little mind he has."

A moment later the yellow men got to their feet with the ex-thief hanging between them by his legs and arms. The poor fellow turned an agonized face to Pethwick.

"Señor! Señor!" he screamed. "Save me! Save poor Pablo! Oh, Holy Mary! Sacred Mother! *Señor, Señor* Pethwick!"

His voice rose to a screech. Blood trickled from his nostrils. His face was white with fear.

Pethwick stared with wide eyes at the struggle. The injustice of this capture for scientific purposes thundered at the American's heart. Pethwick was a white man, of that race which deals justice among weaker men and carries out its judgments with its life.

At Pablo's shriek of despair something seemed to snap in Pethwick's head. He hesitated a second, then lunged into the victorious yellow men.

He never reached them. A wave of flame seemed to lap around him. Then came blackness.

WHEN Pethwick revived, there were no more yellow men in sight. The great shining dirigible stood entirely closed and apparently lifeless. The sun was setting and its rays filled the great charnel valley with a bloody light. The dirigible looked like an enormous red water-stand. In a few minutes the lower half of the great ship was purple in shadow, while the upper half turned a deeper red. The silence was absolute. The three white men stood staring at the strange scene.

Quite suddenly from where the stern of the Zeppelin nested on the ground broke out a light of insufferable brilliancy. A luminous gas seemed to boil out in whirls of furious brightness. It spread everywhere, and in its radiance the great ship stood out in brilliant silver from stem to stern.

In that fulgor Pethwick saw the restraining rods cast off, and the dirigible from the land of One mounted straight into the green heart of the evening sky.

The moment it struck full sunlight at a height of five hundred yards it seemed caught in some tremendously strong wind, for it moved eastward with a velocity that increased by prodigious bounds. Within half a minute its light was reduced from the terrific glare of a furnace to the glow of a headlight, and then to a radiance like that of a shooting star against the darkening eastern sky.

As the watchers followed it with their eyes a strange thing happened. That white light turned to violet, then indigo blue, green, yellow, orange and red, and so faded out.

In the Valle de Rio Infiernillo lingered a phosphorescent mist that told of the first men's passing. It settled on the cliffs and crags and glowed with spectral luminosity. The men looked at each other; they too were covered with this shining stuff.

"Gentlemen," quavered M. Demetriovich, "I believe we have on us the residual emanations of radium. It will likely kill us. Let us go down to the river and wash it off."

The three men set out, stumbling through the darkness, guided somewhat by the faint light given off by their own bodies.

They waded into the black waters of the Infernal River, and began scrubbing each other furiously, trying to rid themselves of this dangerous luminosity. High above them it still shivered from cliff and crag. Presently this faded out and there reigned complete darkness and complete silence.

ON the following morning, when the DeLong Geographical Expedition was about to start back for civilization they saw on the scene of the conflict between Pablo and the yellow soldiers, where the half-breed had stabbed his captors, a number of dark green stains.

On analysis this green also proved to be chlorophyll.

A communication from Gilbert DeLong, President of the DeLong Geographical Society, to the Trustees of the Nobel Prize Foundation, Stockholm, Sweden:

Sirs: It is my privilege to bring to your attention the extraordinary journal of the DeLong Geographical Expedition into that unmapped region of Peru, in the department of Ayacucho, known as the Valle de Rio Infiernillo.

Enclosed with this journal is M. Demetriovich's able presentation of the theory that the dirigible observed in that valley was operated by the Bolshevist government of either Austria or Russia.

Also enclosed is the monograph of Mr. Herbert M. Pethwick, C.E., who presents a most interesting speculation tending to prove that the strange aircraft was a development made independently of the known civilized world by an offshoot of the ancient Incan race, depatriated by the Spaniards in 1553 A. D.

To my mind, both of these hypotheses, although brilliantly maintained, fail to take into consideration two highly significant facts which are set forth, but not greatly stressed in the record of the expedition as kept by Mr. James B. Standifer, Sec.

These two facts are, first, the serial number which served as a name of the man from One, and the other fact, that in both cases where a man from One was wounded he bled what for want of a better term must be called chlorophyllaceous blood.

From few other writers than Mr. Standifer would I accept so bizarre a statement of fact, but his power of exact and minute observation is so well attested by his well-known work, "Reindeer in Iceland," that I dare not question his strict adherence to truth.

The phenomena set forth in the journal happened. That is beyond cavil. The problem for the scientific world is their interpretation.

In handling this problem, I shall not only assume that the journal is accurate, but I shall still further assume that the being known in the record as Mr. Three told the precise truth in every statement ascribed to him.

I have every confidence in Mr. Three's probity for several reasons. First, he has no motive for prevarication. Second, a man who habitually communicates with his fellows by telepathy would not be accustomed to falsehood, since falsehood is physically impossible when a man's mind lies before his companions like an open book. Third, to a man habitually accustomed to truth, lying is a difficult and uncongenial labor. In brief, lying is like any other art; it requires practise to do it well.

In regard to the serial number, both of the above mentioned writers apparently fail to see the enormous problem it possesses. As for the chlorophyllaceous blood, our authors pass it with a vague surmise that somehow it is used in extracting gold, when the whole object of the expedition, according to Mr. Three, was not gold but radium.

Because my esteemed colleagues neglected these two critical points, their whole theories, as ably and ingeniously defended as they are, to my mind collapse into mere brilliant sophisms.

In the brief analysis herewith presented I shall touch on a number of points, among which the questions evoked by the serial number and the chlorophyll blood will be noticed in their proper places.

First, then, Mr. Three himself states that the object of the expedition was the extraction of radium from the pitchblende in the Infernal Valley. The use the men from One made of this radium was demonstrated at the departure of the dirigible, for that vessel must have been propelled by the emanations of radium. According to the description of Mr. Standifer, the ship used no screw propellers or tractors, but a powerful emanation of radium from under its stern shot the great metal cylinder upward exactly as powder propels a skyrocket.

That radium would possess such power is well known. It has been calculated that two pounds of radium would possess sufficient force to swing the earth out of its orbit.

With such power the airship would be capable of enormous speed. A high speed was guessed by M. Demetriovich when he observed the small controlling plane. However, the vastness of this speed was demonstrated by Mr. Standifer in the last paragraph of his account, by his curious observation that the airship, as seen against the evening sky, turned violet, indigo blue, green, yellow, orange, red and then was lost. In other words, it ran through the whole spectrum from the most rapid to the lowest vibrations per second and then vanished.

What is the meaning of this significant detail?

Allow me to recall an analogy in sound. The tone of a bell on a train departing at high speed becomes lower in pitch. This is because the vibrations reach the ear at longer intervals.

Apply that to the change of light observed on the airship. Then the vessel must have been withdrawing at such a speed that it lowered the "pitch" of light vibrations from white to red and finally cancelled its light in blackness.

The only conclusion to be drawn from this is that at the time of the light's extinction, the mysterious metal cylinder was hurtling through space at the speed of light itself; that is to say, at a speed of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second.

OBSERVE that I say, "space," not air. In the first place such a speed in air would fuse any metal. But there is another and a better reason.

It requires the average human eye one-twentieth of a second to perceive a color change. If Mr. Standifer had observed these color changes at the highest possible nerve rate, the operation would have acquired seven-twentieths of a second. Let us assume it required half a second. During that interval the cylinder would have traversed, at the speed of light, ninety-three thousand miles in a straight line. That is more than eleven times the diameter of this globe. Therefore it is far outside of our atmosphere. Also it proves the mysterious vessel was not bound for Austria or Russia. It was leaving the earth.

How was this velocity attained?

I submit by the reaction of radium upon sunlight.

As every schoolboy knows, the drift of a comet's tail is caused by the pressure of light. As soon as this airship arose to the height of about five hundred yards into sunlight, it began to drift eastward with a rapidly increasing velocity. In other words, the metal skin of the ship, which Mr. Pethwick took for aluminum, was probably a much lighter metal—a metal so light that it was capable of being buffeted along in the surf of sunlight. Now if the ship were propelled merely on the barbs of sunbeams, it would have attained the velocity of light. But the velocity of radium emanations is one-fifteenth that of light. So by running down the light current, and allowing the radium to react against the sunbeams, a speed of one and one-fifteenth the velocity of light may be generated; that is one-hundred and ninety-eight thousand miles per second.

Such speed would admit of interplanetary travel.

However, it is probable the men from One could accelerate the radiation from radium by electrical or chemical means. They may have learned to boil the metal as men boil water. In such case the pressure of its radiation would be vastly increased, and with it the possible speed of the ship. This gives an unknown and problematical power of transition far beyond the velocity of light. At such rate a journey even to one of the fixed stars would be within the realm of possibility.

We may therefore with prudence hypothesize that the mysterious ether ship observed in the Valley of the Rio Infiernillo was an interstellar voyager stopping by the earth as a coaling port to refuel with radium.

However, as it is improbable that the ether ship was going beyond the confines of our solar system, a speculation as to what planet the men from One were bound may be reached by noting the day and the hour the ship sailed from the earth.

As our earth swings around the ecliptic, it would be possible for interplanetary mariners to obtain a favorable current of sunlight in any direction. No doubt the navigator of the ether ship was bound for one of the planets in opposition to the sun at the time of the ship's departure. That is to say the yellow men were sailing for either Neptune or Jupiter.

That the men were returning to some planet much larger than the earth is suggested by their small size and extraordinary agility. No doubt these men found the gravitation of the earth slight compared with the attraction to which they were accustomed. This fact gave them extraordinary vigor.

Now let us consider the serial number that formed Mr. Three's name. It was 1753-12,657,109-654-3.

This gives rise to a most interesting speculation:

The probable number of the units contained in a series, when any serial number is given, is computed by multiplying together the component parts of the serial number.

For instance, if one has two series of twelve each, the whole number of objects would be twenty-four. If one had six major series of two subseries of twelve each, the total number of units would be 144.

Applying this idea to Mr. Three's serial number, one would find the total probable population of Jupiter, or the land of One, by multiplying the component parts of this number together. This reached the enormous number product of 14,510,894,489,356. That is to say, fourteen and a half quadrillions.

This utterly quashes the Incan hypothesis. There is not room in South America for fourteen and a half quadrillion people—there is not room on the globe for such a number. That, in fact, is the probable population of either Neptune or Jupiter. For sake of simplicity, we will assume it is Jupiter.

No wonder, then, with such an inconceivable population, the inhabitants of Jupiter are militarized. No wonder they suggested Bolshevism to M. Demetriovich.

With such masses of life, all other species of animals are probably extinct. This would explain why the Jovians were so eager to capture specimens of fauna as well as radium.

The last point in the record, the chlorophyllaceous blood, has been to me the most difficult to find any analogy for in our terrestrial experience.

However, we must needs grasp the problem firmly and proceed with considered but ample steps toward any conclusion to which it leads.

Chlorophyll is the coloring matter in plants. It possesses the power of utilizing energy directly from sunlight. There is no reason to doubt that in the veins of the Jovians it still retains that peculiar power.

With such an extraordinary fluid in his veins, it might be possible for a Jovian to stand in the sunshine and to obtain from it energy and strength, just as a human being obtains energy and strength by eating vegetables that have stood in the sunshine.

In fact, the first method is no more amazing than the second. If, indeed, there be a difference, undoubtedly our human method is the more fantastic. The idea of obtaining energy from sunshine, not by standing in it, as any one would suppose, but by eating something else that has stood in it, is grotesque to the verge of madness.

Let us pursue that thought. No doubt in a concourse of fourteen and a half quadrillion inhabitants space would be so dear that there would be no vacant or tillable land. Therefore on Jupiter every man must absorb whatever sunshine he received. There would be no such thing as eating.

This accounts for the amazement of Mr. Three at seeing Standifer eat his lunch.

To put the same idea in another form—the crew of the ether ship were flora, not fauna.

This accounts for the yellow pear-like texture of their skins. No doubt the young Jovians are green in color. It would also explain why Mr. Three was entirely without anger when attacked and without pity for Pablo's pleadings, or for Standifer when he was burned, or for Ruano when he was murdered.

Anger, pity, love and hatred are the emotional traits of the mammalia. They have been developed through epochs of maternal protection. It is not developed in plants.

Mr. Three was a plant.

It would also explain why Mr. Three took only one animal of each species, instead of a male and a female. Sex is perhaps unknown on Jupiter. Mr. Three was perhaps expecting his animals to bud or sprout.

THE last question to be broached is, How is it possible for plant life to possess mobility?

I wish to recall to the inquirer that here on our own globe the spores of the algae and other plants of that order have the power of swimming freely in the sea. Still, they are plants—plants just as mobile as fishes. They become stationary only at a later stage of their development.

Now, if for some reason these algae spores could retain their mobility, the result would be a walking, swimming or crawling plant.

The line between animal and plant life has never been so clearly drawn. It seems mere fortuity that the first forebear of animal life swam about and caught its sustenance by enveloping it in its gelatinous droplet, rather than by adhering to a reef and drawing its energy directly from the sun.

If that far-off protozoa had clung to the reef, the reader of this paragraph might have been a sycamore or a tamarind—he would not have been a man.

Now Mr. Three's forefather evidently crawled out of the sea into the sunshine but found nothing to envelop; therefore he followed the lip of the Jovian tide up and down, drawing his energy from the sun's rays. The result was a walking vegetable—in short, Mr. Three.

However, gentlemen of the Nobel Prize Foundation, it is not to press the views of the writer that this note was written, but to offer for your consideration as candidates for the fifty thousand dollar Nobel Prize for the year 1920 the names of:

Demetrios Z. Demetriovich, Herbert M. Pethwick and James B. Standifer.

One of the five prizes for 1920 will be awarded to the man or group who have done the greatest service for the advancement of human knowledge during the twelvemonth.

These men, by their observations, taken at the peril of their lives, have blazed new avenues for the use of radium. Their journal suggests the feasibility of the universal use of telepathy, a development now confined to a few adepts and belittled by the unthinking. Their discoveries reveal the possibility of interplanetary travel and the vast commercial emoluments such a trade would possess. Their journal suggests to the ambitious soul of man a step beyond world citizenship, and that is stellar citizenship. It is a great step and will profoundly modify human thought.

In the past, gentlemen, epoch-making discoveries have been too often rewarded by Bridewell or Bedlam; it is gratifying to know that we have reached a stage of civilization where the benefactors of their race receive instead honor and emolument.

GILBERT H. DELONG.

New York City,
May, 1920.

Note by the Transcriber: It may interest the reader to know that the Nobel Prize was awarded to Dr. Gilbert H. DeLong, for the series of brilliant inductions set forth above.—T. S.

THE END.

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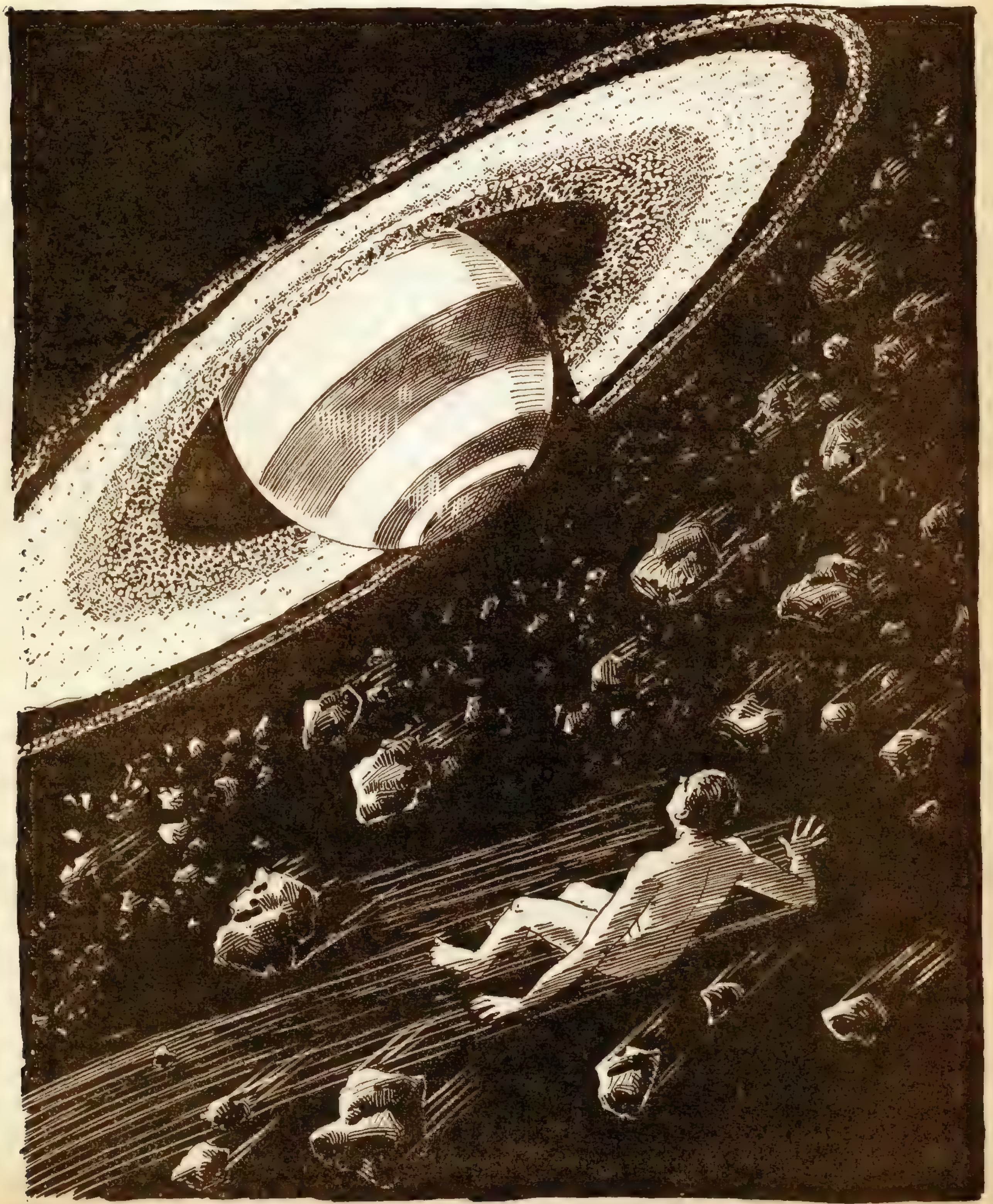
UNDER *the* KNIFE

By H.G. Wells

Author of "The First Men in the Moon," "In the Abyss," etc.



. . . . Flashing suddenly out of the darkenss there came a flying multitude of particles of rock, glittering like dust-specks in a sunbeam . . . . and then I saw a bright spot of light, that shone a little to one side of my path, growing very rapidly larger, and perceived that it was the planet Saturn rushing toward me.

WHAT if I die under it?" The thought recurred again and again, as I walked home from Haddon's. It was a purely personal question. I was spared the deep anxieties of a married man, and I knew there were few of my intimate friends but would find my death troublesome chiefly on account of their duty of regret. I was surprised indeed, and perhaps a little humiliated, as I turned the matter over, to think how few could possibly exceed the conventional requirement. Things came before me stripped of glamour, in a clear dry light, during that walk from Haddon's house over Primrose Hill. There were the friends of my youth; I perceived now that our affection was a tradition, which we foregathered rather laboriously to maintain. There were the rivals and helpers of my later career: I suppose I had been cold-blooded and undemonstrative—one perhaps implies the other. It may be that even the capacity for friendship is a question of physique. There had been a time in my own life when I had grieved bitterly enough at the loss of a friend; but as I walked home that afternoon the emotional side of my imagination was dormant. I could not pity myself, nor feel sorry for my friends, nor conceive of them as grieving for me.

I was interested in this deadness of my emotional nature—no doubt a concomitant of my stagnating physiology; and my thoughts wandered off along the line it suggested. Once before, in my hot youth, I had suffered a sudden loss of blood, and had been within an ace of death. I remembered now that my affections as well as my passions had drained out of me, leaving scarce anything but a tranquil resignation, a dreg of self-pity. It had been weeks before the old ambitions and tendernesses and all the complex moral interplay of a man had reasserted themselves. It occurred to me that the real meaning of this numbness might be a gradual slipping away from the pleasure-pain guidance of the animal man. It has been proven, I take it, as thoroughly as anything can be proven in this world, that the higher emotions, the moral feelings, even the subtle unselfishness of love, are evolved from the elemental desires and fears of the simple animal: they are the harness in which man's mental freedom goes. And it may be that as death overshadows us, as our possibility of acting diminishes, this complex growth of balanced impulse, propensity and aversion, whose interplay inspires our acts, goes with it. Leaving what?

THE master of scientifiction has written a remarkable tale, and although the title may scare you o at first, the story is not of the horror type at all. Quite the contrary. Wells knows his P's and Q's and in this story particularly you will find nothing to complain about. Other authors would, perhaps, foist a real horror tale upon you, but Wells, as usual, handles his material in a masterful manner. Have you ever undergone an operation? If you have, then perhaps you will appreciate more than other readers this fascinating tale.

I was suddenly brought back to reality by an imminent collision with the butcher-boy's tray. I found that I was crossing the bridge over the Regent's Park Canal, which runs parallel with that in the Zoological Gardens. The boy in blue had been looking over his shoulder at a black barge advancing slowly, towed by a gaunt white horse. In the Gardens a nurse was leading three happy little children over the bridge. The trees were bright green; the spring hopefulness was still unstained by the dusts of summer; the sky in the water was bright and clear, but broken by long waves, by quivering bands of black, as the barge drove through. The breeze was stirring; but it did not stir me as the spring breeze used to do.

Was this dullness of feeling in itself an anticipation? It was curious that I could reason and follow out a network of suggestion as clearly as ever; so, at least, it seemed to me. It was calmness rather than dullness that was coming upon me. Was there any ground for the belief in the presentiment of death? Did a man near to death begin instinctively to withdraw himself from the meshes of matter and sense, even before the cold hand was laid upon his? I felt strangely isolated—isolated without regret—from the life and existence about me. The children playing in the sun and gathering strength and experience for the business of life, the park-keeper gossiping with a nursemaid, the nursing mother, the young couple intent upon each other as they passed me, the trees by the wayside spreading new pleading leaves to the sunlight, the stir in their branches—I had been part of it all, but I had nearly done with it now.

Some way down the Broad Walk I perceived that I was tired, and that my feet were heavy. It was hot that afternoon, and I turned aside and sat down on one of the green chairs that line the way. In a minute I had dozed into a dream, and the tide of my thoughts washed up a vision of the resurrection. I was still sitting in the chair, but I thought myself actually dead, withered, tattered, dried, one eye (I saw) pecked out by birds. "Awake!" cried a voice; and incontinently the dust of the path and the mould under the grass became insurgent. I had never before thought of Regent's Park as a cemetery, but now, through the trees, stretching as far as eye could see, I beheld a flat plain of writhing graves and heeling tombstones. There seemed to be some trouble; the rising dead appeared to stifle as they struggled upward, they bled in their struggles, the red flesh was torn away from the white bones. "Awake!" cried a voice; but I determined I would not rise to such horrors. "Awake!" They would not let me alone. "Wike up!" said an angry voice. A cockney angel! The man who sells the tickets was shaking me, demanding my penny.

I paid my penny, pocketed my ticket, yawned, stretched my legs, and, feeling now rather less torpid, got up and walked on towards Langham Place. I speedily lost myself again in a shifting maze of thoughts about death. Going across Marylebone Road into that crescent at the end of Langham Place, I had the narrowest escape from the shaft of a cab, and went on my way with a palpitating heart and a bruised shoulder. It struck me that it would have been curious if my meditations on my death on the morrow had led to my death that day.

BUT I will not weary you with more of my experiences that day and the next. I knew more and more certainly that I should die under the operation; at times I think I was inclined to pose to myself. The doctors were coming at eleven, and I did not get up. It seemed scarce worth while to trouble about washing and dressing, and though I read my newspapers and the letters that came by the first post, I did not find them very interesting. There was a friendly note from Addison, my old school-friend, calling my attention to two discrepancies and a printer's error in my new book, with one from Langridge venting some vexation over Minton. The rest were business communications. I breakfasted in bed. The glow of pain at my side seemed more massive. I knew it was pain, and yet, if you can understand, I did not find it very painful. I had been awake and hot and thirsty in the night, but in the morning bed felt comfortable. In the night-time I had lain thinking of things that were past; in the morning I dozed over the question of immortality. Haddon came, punctual to the minute with a neat black bag; and Mowbray soon followed. Their arrival stirred me up a little. I began to take a more personal interest in the proceedings. Haddon moved the little octagonal table close to the bedside, and, with his broad back to me, began taking things out of his bag. I heard the light click of steel upon steel. My imagination, I found, was not altogether stagnant. "Will you hurt me much?" I said in an off-hand tone.

"Not a bit," Haddon answered over his shoulder. "We shall chloroform you. Your heart's as sound as a bell." And as he spoke, I had a whiff of the pungent sweetness of the anæsthetic.

They stretched me out, with a convenient exposure of my side, and, almost before I realized what was happening, the chloroform was being administered. It stings the nostrils, and there is a suffocating sensation at first. I knew I should die—that this was the end of consciousness for me. And suddenly I felt that I was not prepared for death: I had a vague sense of duty overlooked—I knew not what. What was it I had not done? I could think of nothing more to do, nothing desirable left in life; and yet I had the strangest disinclination to death. And the physical sensation was painfully oppressive. Of course the doctors did not know they were going to kill me. Possibly I struggled. Then I fell motionless, and a great silence, a monstrous silence, and an impenetrable blackness came upon me.

There must have been an interval of absolute unconsciousness, seconds or minutes. Then with a chilly, unemotional clearness, I perceived that I was not yet dead. I was still in my body; but all the multitudinous sensations that come sweeping from it to make up the background of consciousness had gone, leaving me free of it all. No, not free of it all; for as yet something still held me to the poor stark flesh upon the bed—held me, yet not so closely that I did not feel myself external to it, independent of it, straining away from it. I do not think I saw, I do not think I heard; but I perceived all that was going on, and it was as if I both heard and saw. Haddon was bending over me, Mowbray behind me; the scalpel—it was a large scalpel—was cutting my flesh at the side under the flying ribs. It was interesting to see myself cut like cheese, without a pang, without even a qualm. The interest was much of a quality with that one might feel in a game of chess between strangers. Haddon's face was firm and his hand steady; but I was surprised to perceive (*how* I know not) that he was feeling the gravest doubt as to his own wisdom in the conduct of the operation.

Mowbray's thoughts, too, I could see. He was thinking that Haddon's manner showed too much of the specialist. New suggestions came up like bubbles through a stream of frothing meditation, and burst one after another in the little bright spot of his consciousness. He could not help noticing and admiring Haddon's swift dexterity, in spite of his envious quality and his disposition to detract. I saw my liver exposed. I was puzzled at my own condition. I did not feel that I was dead, but I was different in some way from my living self. The gray depression, that had weighed on me for a year or more and colored all my thoughts, was gone. I perceived and thought without any emotional tint at all. I wondered if every one perceived things in this way under chloroform, and forgot it again when he came out of it. It would be inconvenient to look into some heads, and not forget.

Although I did not think that I was dead, I still perceived quite clearly that I was soon to die. This brought me back to the consideration of Haddon's proceedings. I looked into his mind, and saw that he was afraid of cutting a branch of the portal vein. My attention was distracted from details by the curious changes going on in his mind. His consciousness was like the quivering little spot of light which is thrown by the mirror of a galvanometer. His thoughts ran under it like a stream, some through the focus bright and distinct, some shadowy in the half-light of the edge. Just now the little glow was steady; but the least movement on Mowbray's part, the slightest sound from outside, even a faint difference in the slow movement of the living flesh he was cutting, set the light-spot shivering and spinning. A new sense-impression came rushing up through the flow of thoughts; and lo! the light-spot jerked away towards it, swifter than a frightened fish. It was wonderful to think that upon that unstable, fitful thing depended all the complex emotions of the man; that for the next five minutes, therefore, my life hung upon its movements. And he was growing more and more nervous in his work. It was as if a little picture of a cut vein grew brighter, and struggled to oust from his brain another picture of a cut falling short of the mark. He was afraid: his dread of cutting too little was battling with his dread of cutting too far.

THEN, suddenly, like an escape of water from under a lock-gate, a great uprush of horrible realization set all his thoughts swirling, and simultaneously I perceived that the vein was cut. He started back with a hoarse exclamation, and I saw the brown-purple blood gather in a swift bead, and run trickling. He was horrified. He pitched the red-stained scalpel on to the octagonal table; and instantly both doctors flung themselves upon me, making hasty and ill-conceived efforts to remedy the disaster. "Ice!" said Mowbray, gasping. But I knew that I was killed, though my body still clung to me.

I will not describe their belated endeavors to save me, though I perceived every detail. My perceptions were sharper and swifter than they had ever been in life; my thoughts rushed through my mind with incredible swiftness, but with perfect definition. I can only compare their crowded clarity to the effects of a reasonable dose of opium. In a moment it would all be over, and I should be free. I knew I was immortal, what would happen I did not know. Should I drift off presently, like a puff of smoke from a gun, in some kind of half-material body, an attenuated version of my material self? Should I find myself suddenly among the innumerable hosts of the dead, and know the world about me for the phantasmagoria it had always seemed? Should I drift to some spiritualistic *séance,* and there make foolish, incomprehensible attempts to affect a purblind medium? It was a state of unemotional curiosity, of colorless expectation. And then I realized a growing stress upon me, a feeling as though some huge human magnet was drawing me upward out of my body. The stress grew and grew. I seemed an atom for which monstrous forces were fighting. For one brief, terrible moment sensation came back to me. That feeling of falling headlong which comes in nightmares, that feeling a thousand times intensified, that and a black horror swept across my thoughts in a torrent. Then the two doctors, the naked body with its cut side, the little room, swept away from under me and vanished, as a speck of foam vanishes down an eddy.

I was in mid-air. Far below was the West End of London, receding rapidly—for I seemed to be flying swiftly upward—and as it receded, passing westward like a panorama. I could see, through the faint haze of smoke, the innumerable roofs chimney-set, the narrow roadways, stippled with people and conveyances, the little specks of squares, and the church steeples like thorns sticking out of the fabric. But it spun away as the earth rotated on its axis, and in a few seconds (as it seemed) I was over the scattered clumps of town about Ealing, the little Thames a thread of blue to the south, and the Chiltern Hills and the North Downs coming up like the rim of a basin, far away and faint with haze. Up I rushed. And at first I had not the faintest conception what this headlong rush upward could mean.

Every moment the circle of scenery beneath me grew wider and wider, and the details of town and field, of hill and valley, got more and more hazy and pale and indistinct, a luminous gray was mingled more and more with the blue of the hills and the green of the open meadows; and a little patch of cloud, low and far to the west, shone ever more dazzlingly white. Above, as the veil of atmosphere between myself and outer space grew thinner, the sky, which had been a fair springtime blue at first, grew deeper and richer in color, passing steadily through the intervening shades, until presently it was as dark as the blue sky of midnight, and presently as black as the blackness of a frosty starlight, and at last as black as no blackness I had ever beheld. And first one star, and then many, and at last an innumerable host broke out upon the sky: more stars than any one has ever seen from the face of the earth. For the blueness of the sky is the light of the sun and stars sifted and spread abroad blindingly: there is diffused light even in the darkest skies of winter, and we do not see the stars by day only because of the dazzling irradiation of the sun. But now I saw things—I know not how; assuredly with no mortal eyes—and that defect of bedazzlement blinded me no longer. The sun was incredibly strange and wonderful. The body of it was a disc of blinding white light: not yellowish, as it seems to those who live upon the earth, but livid white, all streaked with scarlet streaks and rimmed about with a fringe of writhing tongues of red fire. And shooting half-way across the heavens from either side of it and brighter than the Milky Way, were two pinions of silver white, making it look more like those winged globes I have seen in Egyptian sculpture than anything else I can remember upon earth. These I knew for the solar corona, though I had never seen anything of it but a picture during the days of my earthly life.

When my attention came back to the earth again, I saw that it had fallen very far away from me. Field and town were long since indistinguishable, and all the varied hues of the country were merging into a uniform bright gray, broken only by the brilliant white of the clouds that lay scattered in flocculent masses over Ireland and the west of England. For now I could see the outlines of the north of France and Ireland, and all this Island of Britain, save where Scotland passed over the horizon to the north, or where the coast was blurred or obliterated by cloud. The sea was a dull gray and darker than the land; and the whole panorama was rotating slowly towards the east.

ALL this had happened so swiftly that until I was some thousand miles or so from the earth I had no thought for myself. But now I perceived I had neither hands nor feet, neither parts nor organs, and that I felt neither alarm nor pain. All about me I perceived that the vacancy (for I had already left the air behind) was cold beyond the imagination of man; but it troubled me not. The sun's rays shot through the void, powerless to light or heat until they should strike on matter in their course. I saw things with a serene self-forgetfulness, even as if I were God. And down below there, rushing away from me—countless miles in a second—where a little dark spot on the gray marked the position of London, two doctors were struggling to restore life to the poor hacked and outworn shell I had abandoned. I felt then such release, such serenity as I can compare to no mortal delight I have ever known.

It was only after I had perceived all these things that the meaning of that headlong rush of the earth grew into comprehension. Yet it was so simple, so obvious, that I was amazed at my never anticipating the thing that was happening to me. I had suddenly been cut adrift from matter: all that was material of me was there upon earth, whirling away through space, held to the earth by gravitation, partaking of the earth-inertia, moving in its wreath of epicycles round the sun, and with the sun and the planets on their vast march through space. But the immaterial has no inertia, feels nothing of the pull of matter for matter: where it parts from its garments of flesh, there it remains (so far as space concerns it any longer) immovable in space. *I* was not leaving the earth: the earth was leaving *me*, and not only the earth but the whole solar system was streaming past. And about me in space, invisible to me, scattered in the wake of the earth upon its journey, there must be an innumerable multitude of souls, stripped like myself of the material, stripped like myself of the passions of the individual and the generous emotions of the gregarious brute, naked intelligences, things of new-born wonder and thought, marvelling at the strange release that had suddenly come on them!

As I receded faster and faster from the strange white sun in the black heavens, and from the broad and shining earth upon which my being had begun, I seemed to grow in some incredible manner vast: vast as regards this world I had left, vast as regards the moments and periods of human life. Very soon I saw the full circle of the earth, slightly gibbous, like the moon when she nears her full, but very large; and the silvery shape of America was now in the noonday blaze wherein (as it seemed) little England had been basking but a few minutes ago. At first the earth was large; and shone in the heavens, filling a great part of them; but every moment she grew smaller and more distant. As she shrank, the broad moon in its third quarter crept into view over the rim of her disc. I looked for the constellations. Only that part of Aries directly behind the sun and the Lion, which the earth covered, were hidden. I recognized the tortuous, tattered band of the Milky Way with Vega very bright between sun and earth; and Sirius and Orion shone splendid against the unfathomable blackness in the opposite quarter of the heavens. The Pole Star was overhead, and the Great Bear hung over the circle of the earth. And away beneath and beyond the shining corona of the sun were strange groupings of stars I had never seen in my life—notably a dagger-shaped group that I knew for the Southern Cross. All these were no larger than when they had shone on earth, but the little stars that one scarce sees shone now against the setting of black vacancy as brightly as the first-magnitudes had done, while the larger worlds were points of indescribable glory and color. Aldebaran was a spot of blood-red fire, and Sirius condensed to one point the light of innumerable sapphires. And they shone steadily: they did not scintillate, they were calmly glorious. My impressions had an adamantine hardness and brightness: there was no blurring softness, no atmosphere, nothing but infinite darkness set with the myriads of these acute and brilliant points and specks of light. Presently when I looked again, the little earth seemed no bigger than the sun, and it dwindled and turned as I looked, until in a second's space (as it seemed to me), it was halved; and so it went on swiftly dwindling. Far away in the opposite direction, a little pinkish pin's head of light, shining steadily, was the planet Mars. I swam motionless in vacancy, and, without a trace of terror or astonishment, watched the speck of cosmic dust we call the world fall away from me.

Presently it dawned upon me that my sense of duration had changed; that my mind was moving not faster but infinitely slower, that between each separate impression there was a period of many days. The moon spun once round the earth as I noted this; and I perceived clearly the motion of Mars in his orbit. Moreover, it appeared as if the time between thought and thought grew steadily greater, until at last a thousand years was but a moment in my perception.

AT first the constellations had shone motionless against the black background of infinite space; but presently it seemed as though the group of stars about Hercules and the Scorpion was contracting, while Orion and Aldebaran and their neighbors were scattering apart. Flashing suddenly out of the darkness there came a flying multitude of particles of rock, glittering like dust-specks in a sunbeam, and encompassed in a faintly luminous cloud. They swirled about me, and vanished again in a twinkling far behind. And then I saw that a bright spot of light, that shone a little to one side of my path, was growing very rapidly larger, and perceived that it was the planet Saturn rushing towards me. Larger and larger it grew, swallowing up the heavens behind it, and hiding every moment a fresh multitude of stars. I perceived its flattened, whirling body, its disc-like belt, and seven of its little satellites. It grew and grew, till it towered enormous, and then I plunged amid a streaming multitude of clashing stones and dancing dust-particles and gas-eddies, and saw for a moment the mighty triple belt like three concentric arches of moonlight above me, its shadow black on the boiling tumult below. These things happened in one-tenth of the time it takes to tell them. The planet went by like a flash of lightning; for a few seconds it blotted out the sun, and there and then became a mere black, dwindling, winged patch against the light. The earth, the mother mote of my being, I could no longer see.

With a stately swiftness, in the profoundest silence the solar system fell from me as if it had been a garment, until the sun was a mere star amid the multitude of stars, with its eddy of planet-specks lost in the confused glittering of the remoter light. I was no longer a denizen of the solar system: I had come to the outer Universe, I seemed to grasp and comprehend the whole world of matter. Ever more swifty the stars closed in about the spot where Antares and Vega had vanished in a phosphorescent haze, until that part of the sky had the semblance of a whirling mass of nebulæ, and ever before me yawned vaster gaps of vacant blackness, and the stars shone fewer and fewer. It seemed as if I moved towards a point between Orion's belt and sword; and the void about that region opened vaster and vaster every second, an incredible gulf of nothingness into which I was falling. Faster and ever faster the universe rushed by, a hurry of whirling motes at last, speeding silently into the void. Stars glowing brighter and brighter, with their circling planets catching the light in a ghostly fashion as I neared them, shone out and vanished again into inexistence; faint comets, clusters of meteorites, winking specks of matter, eddying light-points, whizzed past, some perhaps a hundred millions of miles or so from me at most, few nearer, traveling with unimaginable rapidity, shooting constellations, momentary darts of fire, through that black, enormous night. More than anything else it was like a dusty draught, sunbeam-lit. Broader and wider and deeper grew the starless space, the vacant Beyond, into which I was being drawn. At last a quarter of the heavens was black and blank, and the whole headlong rush of stellar universe closed in behind me like a veil of light that is gathered together. It drove away from me like a monstrous jack-o'-lantern driven by the wind. I had come out into the wilderness of space. Ever the vacant blackness grew broader, until the hosts of the stars seemed only like a swarm of fiery specks hurrying away from me, inconceivably remote, and the darkness, the nothingness and emptiness, were about me on every side. Soon the little universe of matter, the cage of points in which I had begun to be, was dwindling, now to a whirling disc of luminous glittering, and now to one minute disc of hazy light. In a little while it would shrink to a point, and at last would vanish altogether.

Suddenly feeling came back to me—feeling in the shape of overwhelming terror; such a dread of those dark vastitudes as no words can describe, a passionate resurgence of sympathy and social desire. Were there other souls, invisible to me as I to them, about me in the blackness? or was I indeed, even as I felt, alone? Had I passed out of being into something that was neither being nor not-being? The covering of the body, the covering of matter, had been torn from me, and the hallucinations of companionship and security. Everything was black and silent. I had ceased to be. I was nothing. There was nothing, save only that infinitesimal dot of light that dwindled in the gulf. I strained myself to hear and see, and for a while there was naught but infinite silence, intolerable darkness, horror, and despair.

Then I saw that about the spot of light into which the whole world of matter had shrunk there was a faint glow. And in a band on either side of it the darkness was not absolute. I watched it for ages, as it seemed to me, and through the long waiting the haze grew imperceptibly more distinct. And then about the band appeared an irregular cloud of the faintest, palest brown. I felt a passionate impatience; but the things grew brighter so slowly that they scarce seemed to change. What was unfolding itself? What was this strange reddish dawn in the interminable night of space?

THE cloud's shape was grotesque. It seemed to be looped along its lower side into four projecting masses, and, above, it ended in a straight line. What phantom was it? I felt assured I had seen that figure before; but I could not think what, nor where, nor when it was. Then the realization rushed upon me. *It was a clenched Hand.* I was alone in space, alone with this huge, shadowy Hand, upon which the whole Universe of Matter lay like an unconsidered speck of dust. It seemed as though I watched it through vast periods of time. On the forefinger glittered a ring; and the universe from which I had come was but a spot of light upon the ring's curvature. And the thing that the hand gripped had the likeness of a black rod. Through a long eternity I watched this Hand, with the ring and the rod, marveling and fearing and waiting helplessly on what might follow. It seemed as though nothing could follow: that I should watch forever, seeing only the Hand and the thing it held, and understanding nothing of its import. Was the whole universe but a refracting speck upon some greater Being? Were our worlds but the atoms of another universe, and those again of another, and so on through an endless progression? And what was I? Was I indeed immaterial? A vague persuasion of a body gathering about me came into my suspense. The abysmal darkness about the Hand filled with impalpable suggestions, with uncertain, fluctuating shapes.

Then, suddenly, came a sound, like the sound of a tolling bell: faint, as if infinitely far; muffled, as though heard through thick swathings of darkness: a deep, vibrating resonance, with vast gulfs of silence between each stroke. And the Hand appeared to tighten on the rod. And I saw far above the Hand, towards the apex of the darkness, a circle of dim phosphorescence, a ghostly sphere whence these sounds came throbbing; and at the last stroke the Hand vanished, for the hour had come, and I heard a noise of many waters. But the black rod remained as a great band across the sky. And then a voice, which seemed to run to the uttermost parts of space, spoke, saying, "There will be no more pain."

At that an almost intolerable gladness and radiance rushed in upon me, and I saw the circle shining white and bright, and the rod shining and black and many things else distinct and clear. And the circle was the face of the clock, and the rod the rail of my bed. Haddon was standing at the foot, against the rail, with a small pair of scissors on his fingers; and the hands of my clock on the mantel over his shoulder were clasped together over the hour of twelve. Mowbray was washing something in a basin at the octagonal table, and at my side I felt a subdued feeling that could scarce be spoken of as pain.

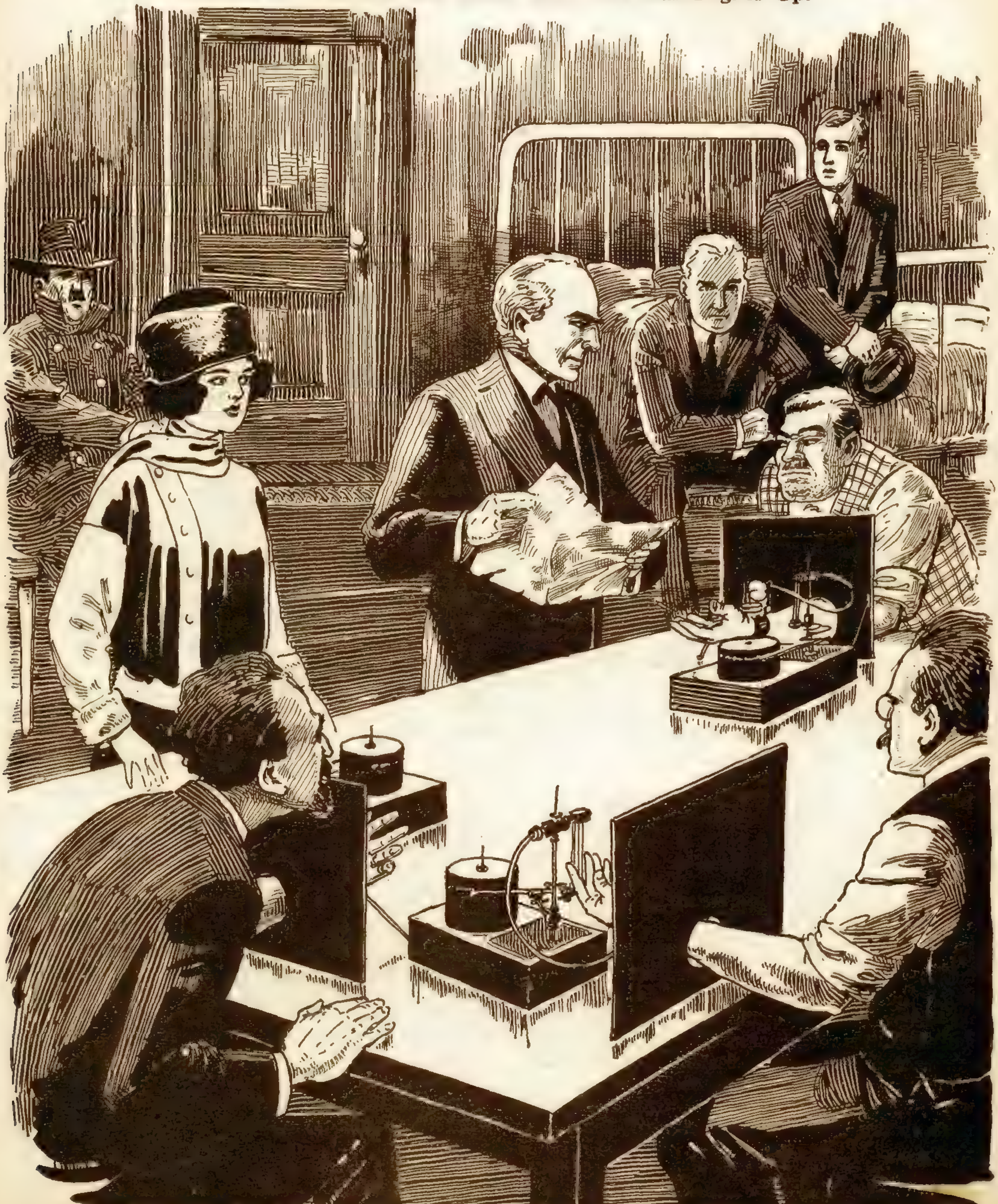
The operation had not killed me. And I perceived, suddenly, that the dull melancholy of half a year was lifted from my mind.

THE END.

The HAMMERING MAN

By Edwin Balmer and William B. MacHarg

Authors of "The Eleventh Hour" and "The Man Higher Up."



At the bottom of each screen was a circular hole just large enough for a man's arm to go through; and at Trant's command the men put their arms through them. . . . "I was certain that there was but one man who could recognize or feel any emotion at sight of that yellow and time-worn paper. . . . I showed it to Meyan, and obtained this really amazing reaction."

LUTHER TRANT, on the rainy morning of April 13th, sat alone in his office. On his wrist, as he bent closely over a heap of typewritten pages spread before him on his desk, a small instrument in continual motion ticked like a watch. It was for him an hour of idleness; he was reading fiction. And with his passion for making visible and recording the workings of the mind, he was taking a permanent record of his feelings as he read.

The instrument strapped on Trant's arm was called a sphygmograph. It carried a small steel rod which pressed tightly on his wrist artery. This rod, rising and falling with each rush of the blood wave through the artery, transmitted its motion to a system of small levers. These levers operated a stylus point, which touched the surface of a revolving drum. And as Trant had adjusted around this drum a strip of smoked paper, the stylus point traced on its sooty surface a continuous wavy line which rose and fell with each beat of the psychologist's pulse.

As the interest of the story gripped Trant, this wavy line grew flatter, with elevations farther apart. When the interest flagged, his pulse returned to its normal beat and the line became regular in its undulations. At an exciting incident, the elevations swelled to greater height. And the psychologist was noting with satisfaction how the continual variations of the line gave definite record of the story's sustained power, when he was interrupted by the sharp ring of his telephone.

An excited, choleric voice came over the wire:

"Mr. Trant? . . . This is Cuthbert Edwards, of Cuthbert Edwards & Co., Michigan Avenue. You have received a communication from my son Winton this morning? Is he there now? . . . No? Then he will reach your office in a very few moments. I want nothing whatever done in the matter! You understand! I will reach your office myself as soon as possible—probably within fifteen minutes—and explain!"

LUTHER TRANT, the psychological detective, is back on the job this month with a scientifiction tale which will keep you absorbed and will arouse your curiosity to no mean degree. The strange part about it all is that although the story is written as fiction, the results can be obtained readily any time today, as the instruments used are well known and can be found in any university and up-to-date college laboratory. Strange to say, however, our courts, so far, have not been willing to use psychological reactions, but no doubt sooner or later they will do so.

The sentence ended with a bump, as Cuthbert Edwards slammed his receiver back upon its hook. The psychologist, who would have recognized the name—even if not forewarned by the communication he had received that morning—as the conservative head of one of the oldest and most "exclusive" Chicago families of New England Puritan extraction, detached the sphygmograph from his wrist and drew toward him and reread the fantastic advertisement that had come to him inclosed in Winton Edwards' letter. Apparently it had been cut from the classified columns of one of the big dailies.

Eva: The 17th of the 10th, 1905! Since you and your own are safe, do you become insensible that others now again wait in your place? And those that swing in the wind! Have you forgot? If you remember and are true, communicate. And you can help save them all! N. M. 15, 45, 11, 31; 7; 13, 32, 45; 13, 36.

The letter, to the first page of which the advertisement had been pinned, was dated "Chicago, April 13th," the same day he had received it, postmarked three o'clock that morning, and written in the scrawling hand of a young man under strong emotion.

Dear Sir: Before coming to consult you, I send for your consideration the advertisement you will find inclosed. This advertisement is the one tangible piece of evidence of the amazing and inexplicable influence possessed by the "hammering man" over my *fiancée*, Miss Eva Silber. This influence has forced her to refuse to marry me——to tell me that I must think of her only as if she were dead.

This advertisement appeared first on last Monday morning in the classified columns of three Chicago papers published in English, and in the German *S*——. On Tuesday, it appeared in the same morning papers and in four evening papers and the German *A*——. It was submitted to each newspaper by mail, with no address or information other than the text as here printed, with three dollars in currency inclosed in each case to pay for its insertion. For God's sake help me, Mr. Trant! I will call on you this morning, as soon as I think you are at your office.

WINTON EDWARDS.

The psychologist had hardly finished this letter, when rapid footsteps in the corridor outside stopped at his office door. Never had there been a more striking entrance into Trant's office than that of the young man who now burst in—disheveled, wet with the rain, his eyes red for want of sleep.

"She has left me, Mr. Trant!" he cried, with no prelude. "She has gone!"

As he sank dazedly into a chair, he pulled from his pocket a small leather case and handed it to the psychologist. Within was the photograph of a remarkably handsome girl in her early twenties—a girl sobered by some unusual experience, as showed most plainly in the poise of her little round head wrapped with its braid of lustrous hair, and the shadow that lurked in the steadfast eyes, though they were smiling and the full lips were smiling, too.

"You are, I presume, Mr. Winton Edwards," said Trant, picking up the letter on his desk. "Now, if you have come to me for help, Mr. Edwards, you must first give me all the information of the case that you have."

"That is Eva Silber," young Edwards replied. "Miss Silber had been employed by us a little over a year. She came to us in answer to an advertisement. She gave us no information in regard to herself when she came, and she has given none since. Because of her marked ability my father put her in complete charge of the house's correspondence with our foreign agents; for in addition to English she speaks and writes fluently German, French, the Magyar dialect of Hungary, Russian, and Spanish.

"I was in love with her almost from the first, in spite of my father's objection to the attachment. The first Edwards of our family, Mr. Trant, came to Massachusetts in 1660. So my father has the idea that anybody who came later cannot possibly be our equal; and Miss Silber, who came to America to work—the women of our family have stayed idly at home—did not get here until 1906."

"Coming from where?" asked the psychologist.

"I don't know," the boy answered, simply. "I think she is an Austrian; for the Magyar dialect she speaks is the least likely of the languages she knows that she would learn by choice. I spoke of this to her once and she did not contradict me." He paused to control his agitation and then went on:

"She had, so far as I know, no friends. So you see, Mr. Trant, that all that makes my father's consent to marrying her only a greater proof of her evident goodness and charm!"

"Then he did consent to your marrying her?" Trant interjected.

"Yes; two weeks ago. I had begged and begged her to, but she never had been willing to give me her promise. A week ago last Wednesday, after she had known for more than a week that father had agreed to it, she finally consented—but only conditionally. I was going away for a short business trip, and Eva told me that she wanted that much time to think it over, but when I came back she would tell me all about herself and, if I still wanted to marry her after hearing it, she would marry me. I never imagined that anyone could force her to change her mind!"

"Yet she did change her mind, you think?"

"Without question, Mr. Trant! And it seems to have been wholly because of the visit of the 'hammering man,' who came to see her at the office the day after I left Chicago. It sounds queer to call him that; but I do not know his name or anything about him, except the fact of his hammering."

"But if the people in the office saw him, you have at least his description."

"They say he was unusually large, gross, almost bestial in appearance, and red-headed. He was plainly dressed. He asked to see Eva. When she caught sight of him she turned back and refused to speak with him."

"How did the man take her refusal?"

"He seemed very angry for a moment and then went out into the public corridor. For a long time he walked back and forth in the corridor, muttering to himself. The people in the office had practically forgotten him when they were startled by a noise of hammering or pounding in the corridor. One wall of the inner office where Eva had her desk is formed by the wall of the corridor, and the man was beating upon it with his fists."

"Hammering excitedly?" asked Trent.

"No. In a rather deliberate and measured manner. My father, who heard the sound, says it was so very distinctive as to be recognizable if heard again."

"Odd!" said Trant. "And what effect did this have on Miss Silber?"

"That is the strangest part of it, Mr. Trant. Eva had seemed worried and troubled ever since she learned the man was there, but this hammering seemed to agitate and disturb her out of all reason. At the end of the day's business she went to my father and abruptly resigned the position of trust she held with us. My father, surprised and angry at her refusal to give a reason for this action, accepted her resignation."

"You do not happen to know whether, before this visit, Miss Silber had received any letter which troubled her."

"She may have received a message at her house, but not at the office. However, there is something still more mysterious. On Sunday, my father, sorry that he had accepted her resignation so promptly, in view of our relationship, ordered the motor and went out to see her— But, good Heavens!"

More About the Lady in the Case

THE loud rat-tat-tat of a cane had shaken Trant's door and cracked its ground glass from corner to corner, and the door was flung open to admit a determined little man, whose carefully groomed pink-and-whiteness was accentuated by his anger.

"Winton, go home!" The elder Edwards glared sternly at his son, and then about the office. "Mr. Trant—you are Mr. Trant, I suppose! I want you to have nothing to do with this matter! I prefer to let the whole affair drop where it is!"

"I reserve the right, Mr. Edwards," the psychologist said, rising, "to take up or drop cases only as I myself see fit. I have heard nothing yet in your son's story to explain why you do not want the case investigated."

"Then you shall have it explained," Cuthbert Edwards answered. "I called on Miss Silber last Sunday, and it is because of what I learned there, that I want Winton to have nothing more to do with her. I went to Miss Silber on Sunday, Mr. Trant, feeling that I had been too hasty on Thursday. I offered her an apology and was reasoning with her when I heard suddenly, in an upper room, the same noises that had so disturbed the quiet of my office on Thursday afternoon!"

"You mean the hammering?" Trant exclaimed.

"Precisely, Mr. Trant! The hammering! If you had heard that sound yourself, you would know that it is a very definite and distinctive blow, given according to some intentional arrangement. I no sooner heard it and saw the uneasiness it again caused in Miss Silber, than I became certain that the same disreputable man who had been to see Miss Silber at my office was then housed in her very home. I insisted, as she was provisionally my son's promised wife, on searching the house."

"Did you find him?" Trant inquired, sharply.

"No, I did not, Mr. Trant, though I went into every room and opened every closet. I found only what appeared to be the usual inmates of the house —Miss Silber's father and the woman who kept house for her."

"Miss Silber's father? Has Miss Silber a father?" Trant interrupted.

"He is hardly worth mentioning, Mr. Trant," the younger Edwards explained. "He must have suffered at some time from a brain trouble that has partly deprived him of his faculties, I believe. Neither he nor the housekeeper, who is not in Eva's confidence, is likely to be able to help us in this matter."

"The man may have slipped out of the house unseen, Mr. Edwards."

"Quite impossible," Cuthbert Edwards asserted. "Miss Silber lived in a little house west of Ravenswood. There are very few houses, none within at least a quarter of a mile of her. The ground is flat, and no one could have got away without being seen by me."

"Your story so far is certainly very peculiar," the psychologist commented, "and it gains interest with every detail. Are you certain it was not this second interview with your father," he turned again to the boy, "that made Miss Silber refuse you?"

"No; it was not. When I got back yesterday and learned from father what had happened, I went out at once to Eva at her home. She had changed utterly! Not her feelings toward me, for I felt certain even then that she loved me! But an influence—the influence of this man—had come between us! She told me there was no longer any question of her marrying! She refused the explanation she had promised to make to me! She told me to go away and forget her, or—as I wrote you—to think of her as dead!

"You can imagine my feelings! I could not sleep last night after I had left her. As I was wandering about the house, I saw the evening paper lying spread out on the library table and my eye caught her name in it. It was this advertisement that I sent you, Mr. Trant! Late as it was, I called up the newspaper offices and learned the facts regarding its insertion. At daybreak I motored out to see Eva. The house was empty! I went round it in the mud and rain, peering in at the windows. Even the housekeeper was no longer there, and the neighbors could tell me nothing of the time or manner of their leaving. Nor has any word come from her to the office."

"That is all, then," the psychologist said, thoughtfully. "'The 17th of the 10th, 1905,'" he reread the beginning of the advertisement. "That is, of course, a date, the 17th of the 10th month, and it is put there to recall to Miss Silber some event of which it would be sure to remind her. I suppose you know of no private significance this date might have for her, or you would have mentioned it."

"None on the 17th; no, Mr. Trant," young Edwards replied. "If it were only the 30th I might help you; for I know that on that date Eva celebrates some sort of anniversary at home."

In Search of the "Hammering Man"

TRANT opened a bulky almanac lying on his desk, and as he glanced swiftly down the page his eyes flashed suddenly with comprehension.

"You are correct, I think, as to the influence of the so-called 'hammering man' on her movements," the psychologist said. "But as to her connection with the man and her reasons, that is another matter. But of that I cannot say till I have had half an hour to myself at the Crerar Library."

"The library, Mr. Trant?" cried young Edwards, in surprise.

"Yes; and, as speed is certainly essential, I hope you still have your motor below."

As young Edwards nodded, the psychologist seized his hat and gloves and his instrument case, and preceded the others from the office. Half an hour later he descended from the library to rejoin the Edwardses waiting in the motor.

"The man who inserted that advertisement—the 'hammering man,' I believe, of whom we are in search," he announced briefly, "is named N. Meyan, and he is lodging, or at least can be addressed, at No. 7 Coy Court. The case has suddenly developed far darker and more villainous aspects even than I feared. Please order the chauffeur to go there as rapidly as possible."

Coy Court, at which, twenty minutes later, he bade young Edwards stop the motor, proved to be one of those short intersecting streets that start from the crowded thoroughfare of Halsted Street, run squalidly a block or two east or west, and stop short against the sooty wall of a foundry or machine shop. Number 7, the third house on the left—like many of its neighbors, whose windows bore Greek, Jewish, or Lithuanian signs—was given up in the basement to a store, but the upper floors were plainly devoted to lodgings.

The door was opened by a slattern little girl of eight.

"Does N. Meyan live here?" the psychologist asked. "And is he in?" Then, as the child nodded to the first inquiry and shook her head at the second, "When will he be back?"

"He comes to-night again, sure. Perhaps sooner. But to-night, or to-morrow, he goes away for good. He have paid only till to-morrow."

"I was right, you see, in saying we had need for haste," Trant said to young Edwards. "But there is one thing we can try, even though he is not here. Let me have the picture you showed me this morning!"

He took from the boy's hand the picture of Eva Silber, opened the leather case, and held it so the child could see.

"Do you know that lady?"

"Yes!" The child showed sudden interest. "It is Mr. Meyan's wife."

"His wife!" cried young Edwards.

"So," the psychologist said swiftly to the little girl, "you have seen this lady here?"

"She comes last night." The child had grown suddenly loquacious. "Because she is coming, Mr. Meyan makes trouble that we should get a room ready for her. Already she has sent her things. And we get ready the room next to his. But because she wants still another room, she goes away last night again. Rooms come not so easy here; we have many people. But now we have another, so to-night she is coming again."

"Does it now seem necessary for us to press this investigation further?" Cuthbert Edwards said, caustically.

As he spoke, the sound of measured, heavy blows came to them down the dark stair apparently from the second floor of the building. The elder Edwards cried, excitedly and triumphantly:

"What is that? Listen! That man—Meyan, if it is Meyan—must be here! For that is the same hammering!"

"This is even better luck than we could have expected!" exclaimed the psychologist; and he slipped by the child and sped swiftly up the stairs, with his companions closely following. At the head of the flight he passed by a stunted woman—whose marked resemblance to the little girl below established at once her two relationships as mother and landlady—and a trembling old man, and with the elder Edwards tore open door after door of the rooms upon that floor and the floor above before the woman could prevent him. The rooms were all empty.

"Meyan must have escaped!" said Cuthbert Edwards, as they returned, crestfallen, to the second story. "But we have proof at least that the child spoke the truth in saying Miss Silber had been here to see him, for she hardly would have allowed her father to come here without her."

"Her father! So this is Miss Silber's father!" Trant swiftly turned to examine with the keenest interest the old man who shrank back, shivering and shuddering, toward a corner. Even in that darkened hall he conveyed to the psychologist an impression of hoary whiteness. His hair and beard were snowy white; the dead pallor of his skin was the unhealthy whiteness of potato shoots that have sprouted in a cellar, and the iris of his eyes had faded until it was almost indistinguishable. Yet there remained something in the man's appearance which told Trant that he was not really old—that he still should be moving, daring, self-confident, a leader among men, instead of cringing and shrinking thus at the slightest move of these chance visitors.

"Meyan? Is it because you are looking for Meyan that you have made all this disturbance?" the woman broke in. "Then why didn't you ask? For now he is at the saloon, I think, only across the street."

"Then we will go there at once; but I will ask you," he turned to the elder Edwards, "to wait for us at the motor, for two of us will be enough for my purpose and more than two may defeat it by alarming Meyan."

Trant descended the stairs, took his instrument case from the motor, and with young Edwards crossed the street quickly to the saloon.

The Story Told by the Pulse Record of a Russian

A DOZEN idlers leaned against the bar or sat in chairs tilted against the wall. Trant examined these idlers one after another closely. The only man at whom he did not seem to look was one who, as the only red-headed man in the place, must plainly be Meyan. "Red-headed" was the only description they had of him, but meager as it was, with the landlady's statement as to Meyan being in the saloon, Trant resolved to test him.

The psychologist took an envelope from his pocket and wrote rapidly upon the back of it.

"I am going to try something," he whispered, as he flicked the envelope across the table to Edwards. "It may not succeed, but if I am able to get Meyan into a test, then go into that back room and speak aloud what I have written on the envelope, as though you had just come in with somebody."

Then, as Edwards nodded his comprehension, the psychologist turned easily to the man nearest him at the bar—a pallid Lithuanian sweatshop worker.

"I suppose you can stand a lot of that?" Trant nodded to his glass of pungent whisky. "Still—it has its effect on you. Sends your heart action up—quickens your pulse."

"What are you?" the man grinned; "temperance lecturer?"

"Something like that," the psychologist answered. "At least, I can show you the effect whisky has upon your heart."

He picked up the instrument case and opened it. The loungers gathered about him and Trant saw with satisfaction that they thought him an itinerant temperance advocate. They stared curiously at the instrument he had taken from its case.

"It goes on the arm," he explained. The Lithuanian, with a grin toward his companions, began to turn up his sleeve. "Not you," Trant said; "you just had a drink."

"Is there a drink in this? I ain't had a drink since breakfast!" said another who pushed up to the table and bared his blue-veined forearm for Trant to fasten the instrument to it.

Young Winton Edwards, watching as curiously as the others, saw Trant fasten the sphygmograph on the mechanic's arm, and the stylus point commence to trace on the sooty surface a wavy line, the normal record of the mechanic's pulse.

"You see it!" Trant pointed out to the others the record, as it unwound slowly from the drum. "Every thought you have, every feeling, every sensation—taste, touch, smell—changes the beating of your heart and shows upon this little record. I could show through that whether you had a secret you were trying to conceal, as readily as I will show the effect whisky has on you, or as I can learn whether this man likes the smell of onion." He took from the free-lunch on the bar a slice of onion, which he held under the man's nose. "Ah! you don't like onion! But the whisky will make you forget its smell, I suspect."

As the odor of the whisky reached the man's nostrils, the record line—which when he smelled the onion had become suddenly flattened with elevations nearer together, as the pulse beat weakly but more quickly—began to return to the shape it had had at first. He tossed off the liquor, rolling it upon his tongue, and all saw the record regain its first appearance; then, as the stimulant began to take effect, the pencil point lifted higher at each rise and the elevations became farther apart. They stared and laughed.

"Whisky effects you about normally, I should say," Trant began to unfasten the sphygmograph from the man's wrist. "I have heard it said that black-haired men, like you, feel its effect least of all; light-haired men more; men with red hair like mine feel the greatest effect, it's said. We red-haired men have to be careful with whisky."

"Hey! there's a red-headed man," one of the crowd cried, suddenly, pointing. "Try it on him."

Two enthusiasts at once broke from the group and rushed eagerly to Meyan. He had continued, inattentive through all, to read his newspaper; but now he laid it down. Trant and young Edwards, as he rose and slouched half curiously toward them, could see plainly for the first time his strongly boned, coarsely powerful face, and heavy-lidded eyes, and the grossly muscular strength of his big-framed body.

"Pah! your watered whisky!" he jeered in a strangely thick and heavy voice, when the test had been explained to him. "I am used to stronger drinks!"

He grinned derisively in the surrounding faces, kicked a chair up to the table and sat down. Trant glanced toward Edwards, and Edwards moved silently back from the group and disappeared unnoticed through the partition door. Then the psychologist swiftly adjusted the sphygmograph upon the out-stretched arm and watched intently an instant until the stylus point had caught up the strong and even pulse which set it rising and falling in perfect rhythm. As he turned to the bar for the whisky, the rear door slammed and the voice Trant was expecting spoke:

"Yes; it was at Warsaw the police took him. He was taken without warning and from his friend's house. What next? The prisons are full, but they keep on filling them; the graveyards will be full next!"

Following Up the Clew of the Sphygmograph

"LOOK! look!" cried the Lithuanian beside Trant at the table. "He bragged about watered whisky, but just the sight of it makes his heart beat bigger and stronger!"

Trant bent eagerly over the smoked paper, watching the stronger, slower pulse beat which the record showed.

"Yes; before he takes the whisky his pulse is strengthened," Trant answered; "for that is how the pulse acts when a man is pleased and exults!"

He waited now, almost inattentively, while Meyan drank the whisky and the others grew silent in defeat as the giant's pulse, true to his boast, showed almost no variation under the fiery liquor.

"Pah, such child-foolishness!" Meyan, with steady hand, set the glass back on the table. Then, as Trant unclasped the straps around his arm, he rose, yawned in their faces, and lounged out of the place.

The psychologist turned to meet young Edwards as he hurried in, and together they went out to join the father at the motor.

"We can do nothing sooner than to-night," Trant said, shortly, an expression of keen anxiety on his face. "I must learn more about this man, but my inquiries must be conducted alone. If you will meet me here again at seven o'clock to-night, say at the pawn-broker's shop we passed upon the corner, I hope to be able to solve the mystery of the 'hammering man,' and the influence he is undoubtedly exerting on Miss Silber. I may say," he added after a moment, "that I would not attach too much weight to the child's statement that Miss Silber is Meyan's wife. It is understood, then, that you will meet me here to-night as I have suggested."

He nodded to his clients, and ran to catch a passing trolley car.

Promptly at seven o'clock in accordance with Trant's directions, young Winton Edwards and his father entered the pawnshop and started negotiations for a loan. Almost immediately after they arrived there, Trant joined them, still carrying in his hand his instrument case. The boy and his father closed their negotiations and went out with Trant into the street. They saw then, to their surprise, that the psychologist was not alone. Two men were awaiting them, each of whom carried a case like Trant's. The elder of the two, a man between fifty and sixty years old, met young Edwards' stare with a benignant glance of his pale blue eyes through an immense pair of gold spectacles. The other was young, pale, broad-browed, with an intelligent face, and his gaze was fixed in a look of dreamy contemplation. They were dressed as mechanics, but their general appearance was not that of workmen.

The door of Meyan's lodging house was opened to them by the landlady. She led the way to the second floor, but paused to show a room to Trant.

"That is Meyan's room," Trant explained. "We will wait for him over here." He followed the woman into a small and stuffy bed-room on the other side of the hall. "We had better not speak while we are waiting and—we had better wait in the dark."

In the strange, stuffy, darkened little room the five sat in silence. Footsteps passed often in the street outside, and twice some one went through the hall. A half hour they waited thus. Then a heavier footstep warned them of Meyan coming. A moment later, the front door opened again and admitted—as Trant felt from the effect of the first tone which reached the boy waiting at his side—Eva Silber. Trant quickly prevented him from going out. It was only after several minutes that he turned on the light and motioned to the two strangers who had come with him. They immediately rose and left the room.

"I am going to submit you both to a very trying ordeal," Trant said to his clients, in a tone so low it could not reach the hallway, "and it will require great self-control on your part. Within five, or I hope at most ten, minutes, I am going to show you into Meyan's room where you will find, among other persons, Meyan himself and Miss Silber. I want you to promise that neither of you will attempt to question or to speak to Miss Silber until I give you leave. Otherwise I cannot allow you to go in there, and I have my own reasons for wanting you to be present."

"If it is essential, Mr. Trant—" the elder Edwards said.

Trant looked to the boy, who nodded.

"Thank you," said the psychologist; and he went out and closed the door upon them.

Fully a quarter of an hour had passed, in spite of Trant's promise to summon them in ten minutes, before the psychologist again opened the door and ushered them into the room they already knew as Meyan's.

The long table in the center of the room had been cleared, and behind it three men sat in a row. Two of these were the strangers who had come with Trant, and the cases they had carried, together with the one Trant himself had brought, stood open under the table. The man who sat between these two was Meyan. Near the table stood Miss Silber.

At sight of her, Winton Edwards made one swift step forward before he recollected the promise he had made, and checked himself. Eva Silber had grown pale as death. She stood now with small hands clenched tight against her breast, staring into the face of the young American she loved. Trant closed the door and locked it.

A Story of the Russian Revolution

"WE can begin now, I think," he said.

He stooped at once over the instrument cases and brought out from them three folding screens, about eighteen inches square when extended, which he set on the table—one in front of each of the three men. At the bottom of each screen was a circular hole just large enough for a man's arm to go through; and at Trant's command the men put their arms through them. Stooping again swiftly over the instrument cases, Trant took out three sphygmographs.

He rapidly adjusted these on the arms of the three men, and set in motion the revolving drums, against which the pencil points traced their wavy lines on smoked paper. His clients, leaning forward in their interest, could then understand the purpose of the screens, which were designed to hide the pitilessly exact records from the three men.

For several moments Trant allowed the instruments to run quietly, until the men had recovered from the nervousness caused by the beginning of the test.

"I am going to ask Miss Silber to tell you now, as briefly as she can," he said, after a pause, evenly and steadily, "the circumstances of her father's connection with the Russian revolution which brought him to the state you have seen, and the reasons why she has left you to go with this man to Russia."

"To Russia?" broke from Winton Edwards.

"To Russia, yes!" The girl's pale cheeks glowed. "You have seen my father, what he is, what they have made of him, and you did not know he was a Russian? You have seen him as he is! Let me tell you—you, who wear proudly the badge of your revolution fought in seven short years by your great-grandfathers—what my father was!

"Before I was born—it was in the year 1887—my father was a student in Moscow. He had already married my mother the year before. The Czar, finding even the teachings he had been advised to permit made people dangerous, closed the universities. Father and his fellow students protested. They were imprisoned; and they kept my father, who had led the protest, so long that I was three years old before he saw his home again!

"But suffering and prison could not frighten him! In Zurich, before he went to Moscow, he had been trained for a doctor. And seeing how powerless the protest of the students had been, he determined to go among the people. So he made himself a medical missionary to the poorest, the most oppressed, the most miserable; and wherever he was called to carry a cure for disease, he carried, too, a word of hope, of courage, of protest, a cry for freedom!

"Late one night, in a terrible snowstorm, just twenty years ago, a peasant brought to our door a note, unsigned for the sake of safety, it seemed, telling father that an escaped political prisoner was dying of exposure and starvation in a hut on a deserted farm ten miles from the town. My father hurried to his horse and set out, with food and fagots, and by morning, through the cold and deep snow, he reached the place.

"There he found a man apparently freezing to death, and fed and warmed him; and when the fellow was able to tell his pitiful tale, father boldly encouraged him, told him of the organization of protest he was forming, and asked him to join. Little by little father told him all he had done and all his plans. At nightfall father held out his hand to say farewell, when the other pulled a pistol from his pocket. In the fight that followed, father was able only to wound the other upon the chest with the blunt knife they had used to cut their food, before the spy called a confederate down from the loft, and father was overcome.

"On the information of these police spies, without trial of any sort—father's friends could discover only that the name of his betrayer was Valerian Urth—father was sentenced to solitary confinement in an underground cell for life! And my mother—because she sent food and fagots to a supposed convict—was exiled to Siberia! Ten years ago, her sister who took me, received word that she died on the convict island of Sakhalin; but my father—" she gasped for breath—"lived, at least!"

She stopped as suddenly as she had begun. Trant, who had stooped swiftly to watch his records more closely when the name of the police spy was mentioned, still kept his gaze steadfastly upon his instruments. Suddenly he motioned to the girl to complete her narrative.

"Five years ago, when I was eighteen, I left my mother's sister and went back to my father's friends, such of them as were still free," she continued. "Many who had worked with him for the organization, had been caught or betrayed. But others and more had come in their places; and they had work for me. I might move about with less suspicion than a man. So I helped prepare for the strikes of 1905, which at last so terrified the Czar that on the 30th of October he issued his manifesto to free those in prison. I had helped to free my father with the rest. I took him to Hungary and left him with friends while I came here. Now, do you not understand why I am going back?" she turned in pitiful appeal to young Edwards. "It is because there is work again in Russia for me to do! The Russian government is taking vengeance today for the amnesty of 1905 which freed my father!"

Records Given by the Instrument

SHE checked herself again and turned to Trant to see if he would force her still to proceed. But he was facing intently, as if fascinated, the strange "hammering man" and his two stranger companions; yet he was not watching their faces or their figures at all. His eyes followed the little stylus points which, before each of the three, continually traced their lines of record. Then he took quickly from his pocket a folded paper, yellow with age, worn, creased, and pierced with pin marks. In the sight of all he unfolded it swiftly upon the table before the three, refolded it, and put it back into his pocket. And though at sight of it no face changed among the three, even Trant's clients could see how one line now suddenly grew flat, with low elevations, irregular and far apart, as the pencil point seemed almost to stop its motion over the smoked paper of the man in the middle, Meyan.

"That is all," said Trant, in a tone of assured triumph, as he unstrapped the sphygmographs from their wrists. "You can speak now, Mr. Edwards."

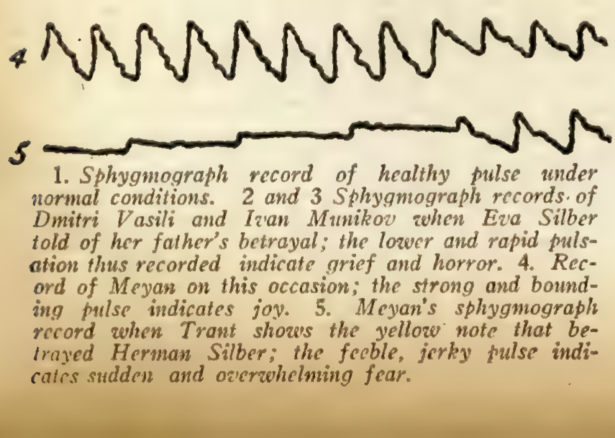
"Eva!" cried Winton Edwards, in wild appeal. "You are not married to this man?"

"Married? No!" the girl exclaimed in horror. "Until last Thursday, when he came to the office, I never saw him! But he has come to call me for the cause which must be to me higher and holier than love! I must leave my love for the cause of the Russian revolution!"

"'In the cause of the revolution'! So!" Meyan now, with a heavy slouch of his muscular body, left his two companions at the table and moved up beside the girl. "Have any more of you anything to say to her before she goes back with me to Russia?"

"To her?—no!" Trant replied. "But to you—and to these gentlemen," he motioned to the two who had sat at the table with Meyan, "I have to announce the result of my test, for which they are waiting. This elder gentleman is Ivan Munikov, who was forced to leave Russia eight years ago because his pamphlet on 'Inalienable Rights' had incurred the displeasure of the police. This younger man is Dmitri Vasili, who was exiled to Siberia for political offenses at thirteen years of age, but escaped to America. They both are members of the Russian revolutionary organization in Chicago."

"But the test—the test!" cried Vasili.



1. *Sphygmograph record of healthy pulse under normal conditions. 2 and 3 Sphygmograph records of Dmitri Vasili and Ivan Munikov when Eva Silber told of her father's betrayal; the lower and rapid pulsation thus recorded indicate grief and horror. 4. Record of Meyan on this occasion; the strong and bounding pulse indicates joy. 5. Meyan's sphygmograph record when Trant shows the yellow note that betrayed Herman Silber; the feeble, jerky pulse indicates sudden and overwhelming fear.*

"The test," the psychologist turned sternly to face Meyan, "has shown as conclusively and irrefutably as I could hope that this man is not the revolutionist he claims to be, but is, as we suspected might be the case, an agent of the Russian secret police. And not only that! It has shown just as truly, though this fact was at first wholly unsuspected by me, that he—this agent of police who would have betrayed the daughter now and taken her back to Russia to be punished for her share in the agitation of 1905—is the same agent, who twenty years ago, betrayed the father, Herman Silber, into imprisonment! True name from false I do not know; but this man, who calls himself Meyan now, called himself then, Valerian Urth!"

"Valerian Urth!" Eva Silber cried, staggering back into Winton Edwards' arms.

But Meyan made a disdainful gesture with his huge, fat hands. "Bah! you would try to prove such things by your foolish test?"

"Then you will not refuse, of course," Trant demanded, sternly, "to show us if there is a knife-scar on your chest?"

Even as Meyan would have repeated his denial, Vasili and Munikov leaped from the rear of the room and tore his shirt from his breast. The psychologist rubbed and beat the skin, and the blood rose to the surface, revealing the thin line of an almost invisible and time-effaced scar.

"Our case is proved, I think!" The psychologist turned from the two who stared with eyes hot with hate at the cringing spy, and again faced his clients.

He unlocked the door, and handed the key to Munikov; then, picking up his instrument cases and record sheets, with Miss Silber and his clients he left the room and entered the landlady's sitting room.

A Happy Denouement

"WHEN I received Mr. Edwards' letter this morning," Trant said in answer to the questions that showered upon him, "it was clear to me at once that the advertisement he inclosed depended for its appeal on reminding Eva Silber of some event of prime importance to herself, but also, from the wording employed, of popular or national significance as well. You further told me that October 30th was a special holiday with Miss Silber. That, I found, to be the date of the Czar's manifesto of freedom and declaration of amnesty to political prisoners. At once it flashed upon me!

"Eva Silber was a Russian. The difference between the 17th given in the advertisements and the 30th—thirteen days—is just the present difference between the old-style calendar used in Russia and ours.

"Before going to the Crerar Library, then, it was clear that we had to do with a Russian revolutionary intrigue. At the library I obtained the key to the cipher and translated the advertisement, obtaining the name of Meyan and his address, and also the name and address of Dmitri Vasili, a well-known pro-revolutionary writer. To my surprise, Vasili knew nothing of any revolutionist named Meyan. It was inconceivable that a revolutionary emissary should come to Chicago and he not know of it. It became necessary to find Meyan immediately.

"My first direct clew was the hammering that we heard in this house. It was too much to suppose that in two separate instances this hammering should be heard, and in each case Eva's father be present and no other discoverable agent, and that still he should have had nothing to do with it. Obviously, it must have been Herman Silber who did the hammering at Eva's home and here in this house. It was obvious, too, that Herman Silber was the 'your own' of the advertisement.

"To test Meyan, whom we found in the saloon, was not difficult. I arranged to have him overhear some one speaking of an arrest at Warsaw, which would at once suggest itself as a hotbed of Russian revolutionists to either a revolutionist or a police agent; but the idea would certainly give positive and very opposite reactions if the man were a true revolutionist or if he were a spy. Meyan's pulse so strengthened and slowed—as under a pleasurable stimulus—that I felt I had received confirmation of my suspicions, though I had not then the information which would enable me to expose the man. To secure this I sought out Dmitri Vasili. He introduced me to Munikov, who had been a friend of Silber before his imprisonment, and between them I got the history of Herman Silber and his daughter.

"I explained to Munikov and Vasili that the methods of the psychological laboratory would be as efficacious in picking out a spy as I have many times proved them to be in convicting the criminal.

"Every emotion reacts upon the pulse, which strengthens in joy and weakens in sorrow, grows slower with anger, faster with despair; and as every slightest variation is detected and registered by the Sphygmograph—I felt certain that if I could test the three men together by having Miss Silber tell her father's story aloud, I could determine conclusively by comparison of the records of the two revolutionists with that of Meyan, what his sympathies really were. I arranged with them to come here with me to-night, and after Meyan had arrived, they went as representatives of the revolutionary movement to ask his credentials.

"When he could furnish none, they proposed, and in fact forced him, into this test. It is a dangerous thing to endeavor to pass one's self off as a revolutionist, and it was safer for him to submit to a test than to have his mission frustrated by incurring not only their suspicion, but possibly death. Completely ignorant of the pitiless powers of psychological methods, and confiding in his steely nerves, which undoubtedly have carried him through many less searching ordeals, he agreed. You saw how perfectly he was able to control his face and every movement of his body while the test went on. But you can see here," Trant spread out his strips of smoked paper, "on these records, which I shall preserve by passing them through a bath of varnish, how useless that self-control was, since the sphygmograph recorded by its moving stylus the hidden feelings of his heart.

"As I lay these side by side, you can see how consistently at each point in the story, Munikov and Vasili experienced the same feelings, but Meyan had feelings which were different. I did not dream, of course, when I started the test that I would discover in Meyan the same man who had betrayed Herman Silber. It was only when at her first mention of Valerian Urth I obtained from Meyan this startling and remarkable record," he pointed to a place where the line suddenly had grown almost straight and flat, "that I realized that if the man before me was not himself Urth, he at least had some close and oppressive connection with him.

"Eva Silber had still the note that had been sent to summon her father on the errand of mercy which had caused his imprisonment.

"She gave it to me before you entered the room. I was certain that of all men in the world there was but one who could recognize or feel any emotion at sight of that yellowed and time-worn paper; and that man was Valerian Urth, who had used it to betray Herman Silber.

"I showed it to Meyan, and obtained this really amazing reaction which ends his record." The psychologist pointed to the record. "It assured me that Meyan and Urth were one."

"This is amazing, Mr. Trant," Cuthbert Edwards said. "But you have left unexplained the most perplexing feature of all—the hammering!"

"To communicate with one another from their solitary cells, Russian prisoners long ago devised a code of spelling letters by knocking upon the wall—a code widely spread and known by every revolutionist. It is extremely simple; the letters of the alphabet," Trant took from his pocket a slip of paper, "are arranged in this manner."

He set down rapidly the alphabet, omitting two letters, arranged in four lines, thus:

a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	k	l	m
n	o	p	r	s	t
u	v	w	x	y	z

"A letter is made," the psychologist explained, "by giving first the proper number of knocks for the line, a short pause, then knocks for the number of the letter in the line. For instance, *e* is one knock and then five; *y* is four knocks and then five.

"By means of this code I translated the figures in the advertisement and obtained Meyan's name and address. I presume he used it not only in the advertisement, but at the office, because his long experience had taught him that Herman Silber, as many another man condemned to the horrors of a Russian prison for a term of years, had probably lost the power of speech, and continued to communicate, in freedom, by the means he had used for so many years in prison."

"Wonderful, Mr. Trant, wonderful!" exclaimed Cuthbert Edwards. "I only regret that we can do nothing to Meyan; for there is no law, I think, by which he can be punished."

The psychologist's face darkened.

"Vengeance is not ours," he answered. "But I have given the key of Meyan's room to Munikov!"

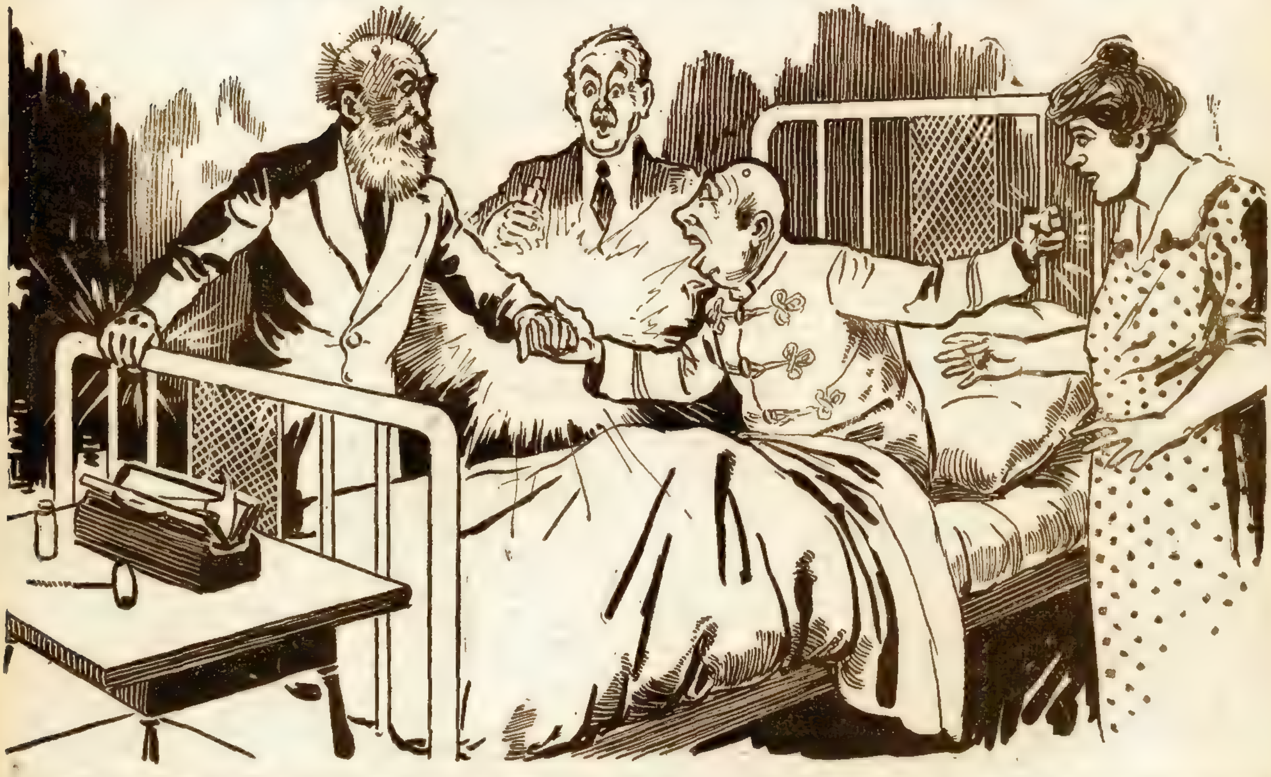
The elder Edwards, clearing his throat, moved over toward Eva and put his arm about her.

"Since you cannot go back to Russia," he said awkwardly, "will you not let me welcome you into your place in my home?" And as the son sprang swiftly forward and caught his father's hand, Trant took up his instrument cases and went out alone into the warm April night.

THE END

ADVANCED CHEMISTRY

By Jack G. Huekels



He grasped the brass bed post with one hand and stretched out the other to aid the staggering man. He caught his hand; both bodies stiffened; a slight crackling sound was audible and simultaneously a blue flash shot from where their hands made contact with the bed post.

PROFESSOR CARBONIC was diligently at work in his spacious laboratory, analyzing, mixing and experimenting. He had been employed for more than fifteen years in the same pursuit of happiness, in the same house, same laboratory, and attended by the same servant woman, a negress, who in her long period of service had attained the plumpness and respectability of two hundred and ninety pounds.

IN this story, like in many other satires, there will be found a whole lot of truth. Every day brings the modern student nearer to the conviction that the world really is electrical in every sense of the word. If you wish a few moments of good entertainment, we recommend this story to you.

"Mag Nesia," called the professor. The servant's name was Maggie Nesia—Professor Carbonic had contracted the title to save time, for in fifteen years he had not mounted the heights of greatness; he must work harder and faster as life is short, and eliminate such shameful waste of time as putting the "gie" on Maggie.

"Mag Nesia!" the professor repeated.

The old negress rolled slowly into the room.

"Get rid of these and bring the one the boy brought today."

He handed her a tray containing three dead rats, whose brains had been subjected to analysis.

"Yes, Marse," answered Mag Nesia in a tone like citrate.

The professor busied himself with a new preparation of zinc oxide and copper sulphate and sal ammoniac, his latest concoction, which was about to be used and, like its predecessors, to be abandoned.

Mag Nesia appeared bringing another rat, dead. The professor made no experiments on live animals. He had hired a boy in the neighborhood to bring him fresh dead rats at twenty-five cents per head.

Taking the tray he prepared a hypodermic filled with the new preparation. Carefully he made an incision above the right eye of the carcass through the bone. He lifted the hypodermic, half hopelessly, half expectantly. The old negress watched him, as she had done many times before, with always the same pitiful expression. Pitiful, either for the man himself or for the dead rat. Mag Nesia seldom expressed her views.

Inserting the hypodermic needle and injecting the contents of the syringe, Professor Carbonic stepped back.

Prof. Carbonic Makes a Great Discovery

"GREAT SAINTS!" His voice could have been heard a mile. Slowly the rat's tail began to point skyward; and as slowly Mag Nesia began to turn white. Professor Carbonic stood as paralyzed. The rat trembled and moved his feet. The man of sixty years made one jump with the alacrity of a boy of sixteen, he grabbed the enlivened animal, and held it high above his head as he jumped about the room.

Spying the negress, who until now had seemed unable to move, he threw both arms around her, bringing the rat close to her face. Around the laboratory they danced to the tune of the negress's shrieks. The professor held on, and the negress yelled. Up and down spasmodically on the laboratory floor came the two hundred and ninety pounds with the professor thrown in.

Bottles tumbled from the shelves. Furniture was upset. Precious liquids flowed unrestrained and unnoticed. Finally the professor dropped with exhaustion and the rat and Mag Nesia made a dash for freedom.

Early in the morning pedestrians on Arlington Avenue were attracted by a sign in brilliant letters.

Death Is Only a Disease—It Can Be Cured by Professor Paul Carbonic

Professor Carbonic early in the morning betook himself to the nearest hardware store and purchased the tools necessary for his new profession. He was an M.D. and his recently acquired knowledge put him in a position to startle the world. Having procured what he needed he returned home.

Things were developing fast. Mag Nesia met him at the door and told him that Sally Soda, who was known to the neighborhood as Sal or Sal Soda generally, had fallen down two flights of stairs, and to use her own words was "Putty bad." Sal Soda's mother, in sending for a doctor, had read the elaborate sign of the new enemy of death, and begged that he come to see Sal as soon as he returned.

Bidding Mag Nesia to accompany him, he went to the laboratory and secured his precious preparation. Professor Carbonic and the unwilling Mag Nesia started out to put new life into a little Sal Soda who lived in the same block.

Reaching the house they met the family physician then attendant on little Sal. Doctor X. Ray had also read the sign of the professor and his greeting was very chilly.

"How is the child?" asked the professor.

"Fatally hurt and can live but an hour." Then he added, "I have done all that can be done."

"All that *you* can do," corrected the professor.

With a withering glance, Doctor X. Ray left the room and the house. His reputation was such as to admit of no intrusion.

—And the Child Lives

"I AM sorry she is not dead, it would be easier to work, and also a more reasonable charge." Giving Mag Nesia his instruments he administered a local anesthetic; this done he selected a brace and bit that he had procured that morning. With these instruments he bored a small hole into the child's head. Inserting his hypodermic needle, he injected the immortal fluid, then cutting the end off a dowel, which he had also procured that morning; he hammered it into the hole until it wedged itself tight.

Professor Carbonic seated himself comfortably and awaited the action of his injection, while the plump Mag Nesia paced or rather waddled the floor with a bag of carpenter's tools under her arm.

The fluid worked. The child came to and sat up. Sal Soda had regained her pep.

"It will be one dollar and twenty-five cents, Mrs. Soda," apologized the professor. "I have to make that charge as it is so inconvenient to work on them when they are still alive."

Having collected his fee, the professor and Mag Nesia departed, amid the ever rising blessings of the Soda family.

At 3:30 P. M. Mag Nesia sought her employer, who was asleep in the sitting room.

"Marse Paul, a gentleman to see you."

The professor awoke and had her send the man in.

The man entered hurriedly, hat in hand. "Are you Professor Carbonic?"

"I am, what can I do for you?"

"Can you——?" the man hesitated. "My friend has just been killed in an accident. You couldn't ——" he hesitated again.

"I know that it is unbelievable," answered the professor, "But I can."

A Tough Case

PROFESSOR Carbonic for some years had suffered from the effects of a weak heart. His fears on this score had recently been entirely relieved. He now had the prescription—Death no more! The startling discovery, and the happenings of the last twenty-four hours had begun to take effect on him, and he did not wish to make another call until he was feeling better.

"I'll go," said the professor after a period of musing. "My discoveries are for the benefit of the human race, I must not consider myself."

He satisfied himself that he had all his tools. He had just sufficient of the preparation for one injection; this, he thought, would be enough; however, he placed in his case, two vials of different solutions, which were the basis of his discovery. These fluids had but to be mixed, and after the chemical reaction had taken place the preparation was ready for use.

He searched the house for Mag Nesia, but the old servant had made it certain that she did not intend to act as nurse to dead men on their journey back to life. Reluctantly he decided to go without her.

"How is it possible!" exclaimed the stranger, as they climbed into the waiting machine.

"I have worked for fifteen years before I found the solution," answered the professor slowly.

"I cannot understand on what you could have based a theory for experimenting on something that has been universally accepted as impossible of solution."

"With electricity, all is possible; as I have proven." Seeing the skeptical look his companion assumed, he continued, "Electricity is the basis of every motive power we have; it is the base of every formation that we know." The professor was warming to the subject.

"Go on," said the stranger, "I am extremely interested."

"Every sort of heat that is known, whether dormant or active, is only one arm of the gigantic force electricity. The most of our knowledge of electricity has been gained through its offspring, magnetism. A body entirely devoid of electricity, is a body dead. Magnetism is apparent in many things including the human race, and its presence in many people is prominent."

"But how did this lead to your experiments?"

"If magnetism or motive force, is the offspring of electricity, the human body must, and does contain electricity. That we use more electricity than the human body will induce is a fact; it is apparent therefore that a certain amount of electricity must be generated within the human body, and without aid of any outside forces. Science has known for years that the body's power is brought into action through the brain. The brain is our generator. The little cells and the fluid that separate them, have the same action as the liquid of a wet battery; like a wet battery this fluid wears out and we must replace the fluid or the sal ammoniac or we lose the use of the battery or body. I have discovered what fluid to use that will produce the electricity in the brain cells which the human body is unable to induce."

"We are here," said the stranger as he brought the car to a stop at the curb.

"You are still a skeptic," noting the voice of the man. "But you shall see shortly."

The man led him into the house and introduced him to Mrs. Murray Attic, who conducted him to the room where the deceased Murray Attic was laid.

Without a word the professor began his preparations. He was ill, and would have preferred to have been at rest in his own comfortable house. He would do the work quickly and get away.

The Professor Operates on a Dead Man

SELECTING a gimlet, he bored a hole through the skull of the dead man; inserting his hypodermic he injected all the fluid he had mixed. He had not calculated on the size of the gimlet and the dowels he carried would not fit the hole. As a last resource he drove in his lead pencil, broke it off close, and carefully cut the splinters smooth with the head.

"It will be seventy-five cents, madam," said the professor as he finished the work.

Mrs. Murray Attic paid the money unconsciously; she did not know whether he was embalming her husband or just trying the keenness of his new tools. The death had been too much for her.

The minutes passed and still the dead man showed no signs of reviving. Professor Carbonic paced the floor in an agitated manner. He began to be doubtful of his ability to bring the man back. Worried, he continued his tramp up and down the room. His heart was affecting him. He was tempted to return the seventy-five cents to the prostrate wife when—THE DEAD MAN MOVED!

The professor clasped his hands to his throat, and with his head thrown back dropped to the floor. A fatal attack of the heart.

He became conscious quickly. "The bottles there," he whispered, "Mix—, make injection." He became unconscious again.

The stranger found the gimlet and bored a hole in the professor's head, hastily seizing one of the vials, he poured the contents into the deeply made hole. He then realized that there was another bottle.

"Mix them!" shrieked the almost hysterical woman.

It was too late, the one vial was empty, and the professor's body lay lifeless.

In mental agony the stranger grasped the second vial and emptied its contents also into the professor's head, and stopped the hole with the cork.

Miraculously professor Carbonic opened his eyes, and rose to his feet. His eyes were like balls of fire; his lips moved inaudibly, and as they moved little blue sparks were seen to pass from one to another. His hair stood out from his head. The chemical reaction was going on in the professor's brain, with a dose powerful enough to restore ten men. He tottered slightly.

Murray Attic, now thoroughly alive, sat up straight in bed. He grasped the brass bed post with one hand and stretched out the other to aid the staggering man.

He caught his hand; both bodies stiffened; a slight crackling sound was audible; a blue flash shot from where Attic's hand made contact with the bed post; then a dull thud as both bodies struck the floor. Both men were electrocuted, and the formula is still a secret.

THE END

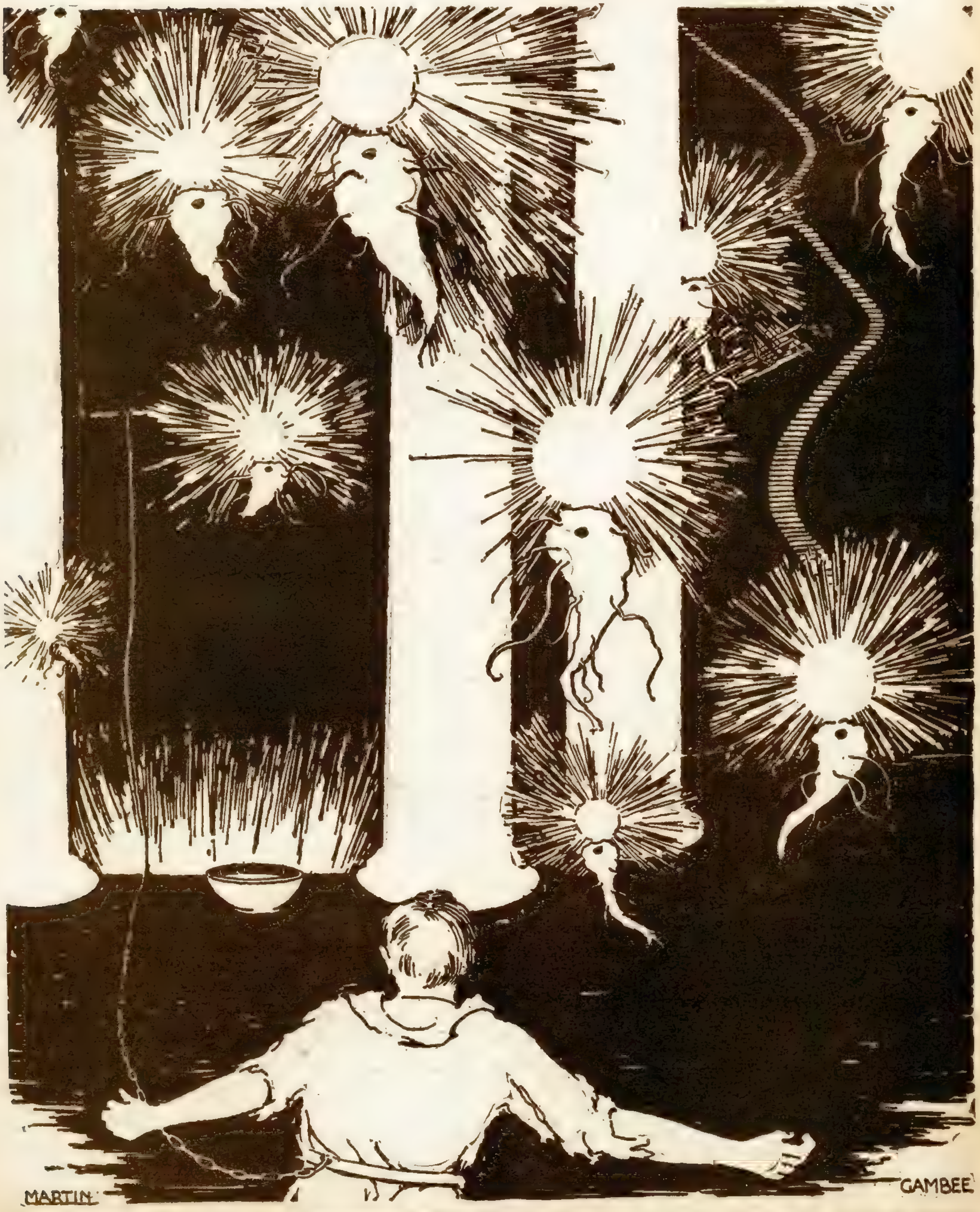
Wanted

The publishers need a quantity of back numbers of AMAZING STORIES for April, May and June.

If you have copies of these issues, will you please be good enough to get in touch with us? It would be appreciated. THE PUBLISHERS.

The PEOPLE of the PIT

By A. Merritt



"I was, in movement and sound, one with these nameless things . . . I saw the things under the lights—great transparent, snail-like bodies—dozens of waving tentacles stretching from them. . . . they were like specters of inconceivably monstrous slugs! . . . they did not crawl or walk—they floated!"

NORTH of us a shaft of light shot half way to the zenith. It came from behind the ragged mountain toward which we had been pushing all day. The beam drove up through a column of blue haze whose edges were marked as sharply as the rain that streams from the edges of a thunder cloud. It was like the flash of a searchlight through an azure mist and it cast no shadows.

As it struck upward the five summits were outlined hard and black, and we saw that the whole mountain was shaped like a hand. As the light silhouetted it, the gigantic fingers of the peaks seemed to stretch, the bulk that was the palm of the hand to push. It was exactly as though it moved to thrust something back. The shining beam held steady for a moment, then broke into myriads of tiny luminous globes that swung to and fro and dropped gently. They seemed to be searching.

The forest had become very still. Every wood noise held its breath. I felt the dogs pressing against my legs. They, too, were silent; but every muscle in their bodies trembled, their hair was stiff along their backs, and their eyes, fixed on the falling phosphorescent sparks, were filmed with the terror-glaze.

I looked at Starr Anderson. He was staring at the North where once more the beam had pulsed upward.

"'The mountain shaped like a hand!'" I spoke without moving my lips. My mouth was as dry as though Lao T'zai had poured his fear-dust down my throat.

"It's the mountain we've been looking for," he answered in the same tone.

"But that light—what is it? Not the aurora surely," I said.

"Whoever heard of an aurora at this time of the year?"

He voiced the thought that was in my own mind.

"It makes me think something is being hunted up there," he said. "That the lights are seeking—an unholy sort of hunt—it's well for us to be out of range."

"The mountain seems to move each time the shaft shoots up," I said. "What's it keeping back, Starr? It makes me think of the frozen hand of cloud that Shan Nadour set before the Gate of Ghouls to keep them in the lairs that Eblis cut for them."

HERE is a "different" story by the well-known author, a story that deals with intelligences that seem almost incomprehensible to our minds. We have always maintained that it is possible to have intelligence in an envelope other than skin, flesh and blood.

You will be greatly interested by this exceedingly clever story.

He raised a hand, listening.

From the north and high overhead there came a whispering. It was not the rustling of the aurora, that rushing crackling sound like ghosts of the winds that blew at Creation racing through the skeleton leaves of ancient trees that sheltered Lilith. This whispering held in it a demand. It was eager. It called us to come up where the beam was flashing. It—drew!

There was in it a note of inexorable insistence. It touched my heart with a thousand tiny fear-tipped fingers and it filled me with a vast longing to race on and merge myself in the light. It must have been so that Ulysses felt when he strained at the mast and strove to obey the crystal sweet singing of the sirens.

The whispering grew louder.

"What the hell's the matter with those dogs?" cried Starr Anderson savagely. "Look at them!"

The malemiuts, whining, were racing away toward the light. We saw them disappear among the trees. There came back to us a mournful howling. Then that too died away and left nothing but the insistent murmuring overhead.

The glade we had camped in looked straight to the North. We had reached, I suppose, three hundred miles above the first great bend of the Kuskokwim toward the Yukon. Certainly we were in an untrodden part of the wilderness. We had pushed through from Dawson at the breaking of the spring, on a fair lead to a lost mountain between the five peaks of which, so the Athabascan medicine man had told us, the gold streams out like putty from a clinched fist.

Not an Indian were we able to get to go with us. The land of the Hand Mountain was accursed, they said.

We had sighted a mountain the night before, its ragged top faintly outlined against a pulsing glow. And now by the light that had led us, we saw that it was the very place we had sought.

Anderson stiffened. Through the whispering had broken a curious pad—pad and a rustling. It sounded as though a small bear were moving toward us.

I threw a pile of wood on the fire, and as it blazed up, saw something break through the bushes. It walked on all fours, but it did not walk like a bear. All at once it flashed upon me—it was like a baby crawling upstairs. The forepaws lifted themselves in grotesquely infantile fashion. It was grotesque but it was—terrible. It drew closer. We reached for our guns—and dropped them. Suddenly we knew that this crawling thing was a man!

It was a man. Still with that high climbing pad—pad he swayed to the fire. He stopped.

"Safe," whispered the crawling man in a voice that was an echo of the whispering overhead. "Quite safe here. They can't get out of the blue, you know. They can't get you—unless you answer them—"

"He's mad," said Anderson, and then gently to this broken thing that had been a man; "You're all right—there's nothing after you."

"Don't answer them," repeated the crawling man, "the lights, I mean."

"The lights," I cried, startled even out of pity. "What are they?"

"The people of the pit!" he murmured.

He fell upon his side. We ran to him. Anderson knelt.

"God's love!" he cried. "Frank, look at this!"

He pointed to the hands. The wrists were covered with torn rags of a heavy shirt. The hands themselves were—stumps! The fingers had been bent into the palms and the flesh had been worn to the bone. They looked like the feet of a little black elephant! My eyes traveled down the body. Around the waist was a heavy band of yellow metal. From it fell a ring and a dozen links of shining white chain!

"What is he? Where did he come from?" said Anderson. "Look, he's fast asleep—yet even in his sleep his arms try to climb and his feet draw themselves up one after the other! And his knees—how in God's name was he ever able to move on them?"

It was even as he said. In the deep sleep that had come upon the crawler, arms and legs kept raising in a deliberate, dreadful climbing motion. It was as though they had a life of their own—they kept their movement independently of the motionless body. They were semaphoric motions. If you have ever stood at the back of a train and watched the semaphores rise and fall you will know exactly what I mean.

Abruptly the overhead whispering ceased. The shaft of light dropped and did not rise again. The crawling man became still. A gentle glow began to grow around us. The short Alaskan summer night was over. Anderson rubbed his eyes and turned me a haggard face.

"Man!" he exclaimed. "You look as though you have been sick!"

"No more than you, Starr!" I said. "That was sheer, stark horror! What do you make of it all?"

"I'm thinking our only answer lies there," he answered, pointing to the figure that lay so motionless under the blankets we had thrown over him. "Whatever they were—that's what they were after. There was no aurora about those lights, Frank. It was like the flaring up of some queer hell the preacher folk never frightened us with."

"We'll go no further to-day," I said. "I wouldn't wake him up for all the gold that runs between the fingers of the five peaks—nor for all the devils that may be behind them."

The crawling man lay in a sleep as deep as the Styx. We bathed and bandaged the pads that had been his hands. Arms and legs were as rigid as though they were crutches. He did not move while we worked over him. He lay as he had fallen, the arms a trifle raised, the knees bent.

I began filing the band that ringed the sleeper's waist. It was gold, but it was like no gold I had ever handled. Pure gold is soft. This was soft too—but it had an unclean, viscid life of its own.

It clung to the file and I could have sworn that it writhed like a live thing when I cut into it. I gashed through it, bent it away from the body and hurled it away. It was—loathsome!

All that day the crawler slept. Darkness came and still he slept. But that night there was no shaft of blue haze from behind the peaks, no questioning globes of light, no whispering. Some spell of horror seemed withdrawn—but not far. Both Anderson and I felt that the menace was there, withdrawn perhaps, but waiting.

It was noon next day when the crawling man awoke. I jumped as the pleasant drawling voice sounded.

"How long have I slept?" he said. His pale blue eyes grew quizzical as I stared at him.

"A night—and almost two days," I said.

"Were there any lights up there last night?" He nodded to the North eagerly. "Any whispering?"

"Neither," I answered. His head fell back and he stared up at the sky.

"They've given it up, then?" he said at last.

"Who have given it up?" asked Anderson.

And once more—"The people of the pit!" the crawling man answered.

We stared at him and again faintly I, for one, felt that queer, maddening desire that the lights had brought with them.

"The people of the pit," he repeated. "Things some god of evil made before the Flood and that somehow have escaped the good God's vengeance. They were calling me!" he added simply.

Anderson and I looked at each other, the same thought in both our minds.

"No," said the crawling man, reading what it was, "I'm not insane. Give me a very little to drink. I'm going to die soon. Will you take me as far South as you can before I die? And afterwards will you build a fire and burn me? I want to be in such shape that no hellish wile of theirs can drag my body back to them. You'll do it when I've told you about them," he said as we hesitated.

He drank the brandy and water we lifted to his lips.

"Arms and legs quite dead," he said. "Dead as I'll be soon. Well, they did well for me. Now I'll tell you what's up there behind that hand. Hell!

"Listen. My name is Stanton—Sinclair Stanton. Class 1900, Yale. Explorer. I started away from Dawson last year to hunt for five peaks that rose like a hand in a haunted country and ran pure gold between them. Same thing you were after? I thought so. Late last fall my comrade sickened. I sent him back with some Indians. A little later my Indians found out what I was after. They ran away from me. I decided I'd stick, built a cabin, stocked myself with food and lay down to winter it. Did it not badly—it was a pretty mild winter you'll remember. In the spring I started off again. A little less than two weeks ago I sighted the five peaks. Not from this side though—the other. Give me some more brandy."

"I'd made too wide a detour," he went on. "I'd gotten too far north, I beat back. From this side you see nothing but forest straight up to the base of the hand. Over on the other side—"

He was silent for a moment.

"Over there is forest too. But it doesn't reach so far. No! I came out of it. Stretching for miles in front of me was a level plain. It was as worn and ancient looking as the desert around the broken shell of Babylon. At its end rose the peaks. Between me and them—far off—was what looked like a low dike of rocks. Then—I ran across the road!"

"The road!" cried Anderson incredulously.

"The road," said the crawling man. "A fine, smooth, stone road. It ran straight on to the mountain. Oh, it was a road all right—and worn as though millions and millions of feet had passed over it for thousands of years. On each side of it were sand and heaps of stones. After a while I began to notice these stones. They were cut, and the shape of the heaps somehow gave me the idea that a hundred thousand years ago they might have been the ruins of houses. They were as old looking as that. I sensed man about them and at the same time they smelled of immemorial antiquity.

"The peaks grew closer. The heaps of ruins thicker. Something inexpressibly desolate hovered over them, something sinister; something reached from them that struck my heart like the touch of ghosts so old that they could be only the ghosts of ghosts. I went on.

"And now I saw that what I had thought to be the low range at the base of the peaks was a thicker litter of ruins. The Hand Mountain was really much farther off. The road itself passed through these ruins and between two high rocks that raised themselves like a gateway."

The crawling man paused. His hands began that sickening pad—pad again. Little drops of bloody sweat showed on his forehead. But after a moment or two he grew quiet. He smiled.

"They were a gateway," he said. "I reached them. I went between them. I sprawled flat, clutching the earth in awe and terror. For I was on a broad stone platform. Before me was—sheer space! Imagine the Grand Canyon three times as wide, roughly circular and with the bottom dropped out. That would be something like what I was looking into.

"It was like peeping over the edge of a cleft world down into the infinity where the planets roll! On the far side stood the five peaks. They looked like a gigantic warning hand stretched up to the sky. The lips of the abyss curved away on each side of me.

"I could see down perhaps a thousand feet. Then a thick blue haze shut out the eye. It was like the blue you see gather on the high hills at dusk. But the pit—it was awesome! Awesome as the Maori's Gulf of Ranalak, that sinks between the living and the dead and that only the freshly released soul has strength to leap across—but never strength to leap back again.

"I crept back from the verge and stood up, weak, shaking. My hand rested against one of the rocks of the gateway. There was carving upon it. There in sharp outlines was the heroic figure of a man. His back was turned. His arms were stretched above his head and between them he carried something that looked like a sun disk with radiating lines of light. There were symbols on the disk that reminded me of Chinese. But they were not Chinese. No! They had been made by hands, dust ages before the Chinese stirred in the womb of time.

"I looked at the opposite rock. It bore an exactly similar figure. There was an odd peaked head-dress on both. The rocks themselves were triangular and the carvings were on the side closest the pit. The gesture of the men seemed to be that of holding something back—of barring. I looked closer. Behind the outstretched hands and the disks I seemed to see a host of vague shapes and, plainly a multitude of globes.

"I traced them out vaguely. Suddenly I felt unaccountably sick. There had come to me an impression—I can't call it sight—an impression of enormous upright slugs. Their swollen bodies seemed to dissolve, then swim into sight, then dissolve again—all except the globes which were their heads and that remained clear. They were—unutterably loathsome. Overcome by an inexplicable and overpowering nausea I stretched myself upon the slab. And then—I saw the stairway that led down into the pit!"

"A stairway!" we cried.

"A stairway," repeated the crawling man as patiently as before. "It seemed not so much carved out of the rock as built into it. Each slab was perhaps twenty feet long and five feet wide. They ran down from the platform and vanished into the blue haze."

"A stairway," said Anderson incredulously, "built into the wall of a precipice and leading down into a bottomless pit—"

"Not bottomless," interrupted the crawling man. "There was a bottom. Yes. I reached it," he went on dully. "Down the stairway—down the stairway."

He seemed to grip his mind.

"Yes," he went on firmly. "I went down the stairway. But not that day. I made my camp back of the gates. At dawn I filled my knapsack with food, my two canteens with water from a spring that wells up there by the gateway, walked between the carved monoliths and stepped over the edge of the pit.

"The steps run along the side of the pit at a forty degree pitch. As I went down and down I studied them. They were of a greenish rock quite different from the granitic porphyry that formed the wall of the pit. At first I thought that the builders had taken advantage of an outcropping stratum, and had carved the gigantic flight from it. But the regularity of the angle at which it fell made me doubtful of this theory.

"After I had gone down perhaps half a mile I stepped out upon a landing. From this landing the stairs made a V-shaped turn and again ran on downward, clinging to the cliff at the same angle as the first flight. After I had made three of these turns I knew that the steps dropped straight down to wherever they went in a succession of angles. No strata could be so regular as that. No, the stairway was built by hands! But whose? And why? The answer is in those ruins around the edge of the pit—never I think to be read.

"By noon I had lost sight of the lip of the abyss. Above me, below me, was nothing but the blue haze. Beside me, too, was nothingness, for the further breast of rock had long since vanished in the same haze. I felt no dizziness, and no fear; only a vast curiosity. What was I to discover? Some ancient and wonderful civilization that had ruled when the poles were tropical gardens? A new world? The key to the mystery of man himself? Nothing living, I felt sure—all was too old for life. Still, a work so wonderful must lead to something quite as wonderful I knew. What was it? I went on.

"At regular intervals I had passed the mouths of small caves. There would be three thousand steps and then an opening, three thousand steps more and an opening—and so on and on. Late that afternoon I stopped before one of these clefts. I suppose I had gone then three miles down the pit, although the angles were such that I had walked in all fully ten miles. I examined the entrance. On each side was carved the same figures as on the great portals at the lip of the pit. But now they were standing face forward, the arms outstretched with their disks, as though holding something back from the shaft itself. Now, too, their faces were covered with veils and there were no hideous shapes behind them.

"I went inside the cave. It ran back for twenty yards like a burrow. It was dry and perfectly light. I could see, outside, the blue haze rising upward like a column. I felt an extraordinary sense of security, although I had not been conscious of any fear. I felt that the figures at the entrance were guardians—but against what? I felt so secure that even curiosity on this point was dulled.

"The blue haze thickened and grew faintly luminescent. I fancied that it was dusk above. I ate and drank a little and slept. When I awoke the blue had lightened again, and I fancied it was dawn above. I went on. I forgot the gulf yawning at my side. I felt no fatigue and little hunger or thirst, although I had drunk and eaten sparingly. That night I spent within another of the caves. And at dawn I descended again.

"It was late that day when I first saw the city—"

He was silent for a time.

"The city," he said at last, "the city of the pit! But not such a city as you have ever seen—nor any other man who has lived to tell of it. The pit, I think, must be shaped like a bottle; the opening before the five peaks is the neck. But how wide the bottom is I do not know—thousands of miles, maybe. And what may lie behind the city—I do not know.

"I had begun to catch little glints of light far down in the blue. Then I saw the tops of—trees, I suppose they are. But not our kind of trees—unpleasant, reptilian trees. They reared themselves on high, thin trunks and their tops were nests of thick tendrils with ugly little leaves like narrow heads—or snake heads.

"The trees were red, a vivid, angry red. Here and there I began to glimpse spots of shining yellow. I knew these were water because I could see things breaking through their surface—or at least I could see the splash and ripple but what it was that disturbed them I never saw.

"Straight beneath me was the city. Mile after mile of closely packed cylinders that lay upon their sides in pyramids of three, of five—of dozens—piled upon each other. It is so hard to make you see what that city is like—look, suppose you have water pipes of a certain length and first you lay three of them side by side and on top of them you place two and on these two one; or suppose you take five for a foundation and place on these four and then three, then two and then one. Do you see? That was the way they looked.

"And they were topped by towers, by minarets, by flares, by fans and twisted monstrosities. They gleamed as though coated with pale rose flame. Beside them the venomous red trees raised themselves like the heads of hydras guarding nests of gigantic jeweled and sleeping worms!

"A few feet beneath me the stairway jutted out into a titanic arch, unearthly as the span that bridges Hell and leads to Asgard. It curved out and down straight through the top of the highest pile of carven cylinders and then—it vanished through it. It was appalling—it was demoniac—"

The crawling man stopped. His eyes rolled up into his head. He trembled and again his arms and legs began their horrible crawling movement. From his lips came a whispering. It was an echo of the high murmuring we had heard the night he came to us. I put my hands over his eyes. He quieted.

"The things accursed!" he said. "The People of the Pit! Did I whisper? Yes—but they can't get me now—they can't!"

After a time he began as quietly as before.

"I crossed that span. I went down through the top of that—building. Blue darkness shrouded me for a moment and I felt the steps twist into a spiral. I wound down and then I was standing high up in—I can't tell you what. I'll have to call it a room. We have no images for what is in the pit. A hundred feet below me was the floor. The walls sloped down and out from where I stood in a series of widening crescents. The place was colossal—and it was filled with a curious mottled red light. It was like the light inside a green and gold-flecked fire opal. The spiral stairs wound below me. I went down to the last step. Far in front of me rose a high columned altar. Its pillars were carved in monstrous scrolls—like mad octopuses with a thousand drunken tentacles; they rested on the backs of shapeless monstrosities carved in crimson stone. The altar front was a gigantic slab of purple covered with carvings.

"I can't describe these carvings! No human being could—the human eye cannot grasp them any more than it can grasp shapes that haunt the fourth dimension. Only a subtle sense in the back of the brain grasped them vaguely. They were formless things that gave no conscious image, yet pressed into the mind like small hot seals—ideas of hate—of combat between unthinkable monstrous things—victories in a nebulous hell of steaming, obscene jungles—aspirations and ideals immeasurably loathsome—

"And as I stood I grew aware of something that lay behind the lip of the altar fifty feet above me. I *knew* it was there—I felt it with every hair and every tiny bit of my skin. Something infinitely malignant, infinitely horrible, infinitely ancient. It lurked, it brooded, it saw me, it threatened and it—was invisible!

"Behind me was a circle of blue light. Something urged me to turn back, to climb the stairs and make away. It was impossible. Terror of that unseen watching thing behind the altar raced me onward like a whirlwind. I passed through the circle. I was in a way that stretched on into dim distance between the rows of carven cylinders.

"Here and there the red trees arose. Between them rolled the stone burrows. And now I could take in the amazing ornamentation that clothed them. They were like the trunks of smooth skinned trees that had fallen and had been clothed with high reaching fantastic orchids. Yes—those cylinders were like that—and more. They should have gone out with the dinosaurs. They were—monstrous! They struck the eyes like a blow and they passed across the nerves like a rasp. And nowhere was there sight or sound of a living thing.

"There were circular openings in the cylinders like the opening in the temple of the stairway through which I had run. I passed through one of them. I was in a long bare vaulted room whose curving sides half closed twenty feet over my head, leaving a wide slit that opened into another vaulted chamber above. I saw nothing in the room save the same mottled reddish light of the temple.

"I stumbled. Still I could see nothing, but—my skin prickled and my heart stopped! There *was* something on the floor over which I had tripped!

"I reached down—and my hand touched a—thing—cold and smooth—that moved under it—I turned and ran out of that place. I was filled with a sick loathing that had in it something of madness—I ran on and on—blindly—wringing my hands—weeping with horror—

"When I came to myself I was still among the stone cylinders and red trees. I tried to retrace my steps, to find the temple; for now I was more than afraid. I was like a new soul panic-stricken with the first terrors of hell. But I could not find the temple! And the haze began to thicken and glow; the cylinders to shine more brightly.

"Suddenly I knew that it was dusk in my own world above and that the thickening of the haze was the signal for the awakening of whatever things lived in the pit.

"I scrambled up the sides of one of the burrows. I hid behind a twisted nightmare of stone. Perhaps, I thought, there was a chance of remaining hidden until the blue lightened, the peril passed, and I could escape. There began to grow around me a murmur. It was everywhere—and it grew and grew into a great whispering. I peeped from the side of the stone down into the street.

"I saw lights passing and repassing. More and more lights—they swam out of the circular doorways and they thronged the street. The highest were eight feet above the pave; the lowest perhaps two. They hurried, they sauntered, they bowed, they stopped and whispered—and there was *nothing* under them!"

"Nothing under them!" breathed Anderson.

"No," he went on, "that was the terrible part of it—there was nothing under them. Yet certainly the lights were living things. They had consciousness, volition—what else I did not know. They were nearly two feet across, the largest. Their center was a bright nucleus—red, blue, green. This nucleus faded off gradually into a misty glow that did not end abruptly. It, too, seemed to fade off into nothingness—but a nothingness that had under it a—somethingness.

"I strained my eyes trying to grasp this body into which the lights merged and which one could only *feel* was there, but could not *see.*

"And all at once I grew rigid. Something cold, and thin like a whip, had touched my face. I turned my head. Close behind were three of the lights. They were a pale blue. They looked at me—if you can imagine lights that are eyes.

"Another whiplash gripped my shoulder. Under the closest light came a shrill whispering. I shrieked. Abruptly the murmuring in the street ceased.

"I dragged my eyes from the pale-blue globe that held them and looked out; the lights in the streets were rising by myriads to the level of where I stood! There they stopped and peered at me. They crowded and jostled as though they were a crowd of curious people on Broadway.

"That was the horrible part of it. I felt a score of the lashes touch me—I shrieked again. Then—darkness and a sensation of falling through vast depths.

"When I awoke to consciousness I was again in the great place of the stairway, lying at the foot of the altar. All was silent. There were no lights—only the mottled red glow.

"I jumped to my feet and ran toward the steps. Something jerked me back to my knees. And then I saw that around my waist had been fastened a yellow ring of metal. From it hung a chain, and this chain passed up over the lip of the high ledge.

"I reached into my pockets for my knife to cut through the ring. It was not there! I had been stripped of everything except one of the canteens that I had hung around my neck, and which I suppose they had thought was part of me.

"I tried to break the ring. It seemed alive. It writhed in my hands and drew itself closer around me!

"I pulled at the chain. It was immovable. There came over me in a flood consciousness of the unseen thing above the altar, and I groveled at the foot of the slab. Think—alone in that place of strange light with the brooding ancient horror above me—a monstrous thing, a thing unthinkable—an unseen thing that poured forth horror—

"After a while I gripped myself. Then I saw beside one of the pillars a yellow bowl filled with a thick, white liquid. I drank it. If it killed I did not care. But its taste was pleasant, and as I drank strength came back to me with a rush. Clearly I was not to be starved. The people of the pit, whatever they were, had a conception of human needs.

"And now once more the reddish mottled gleam began to deepen. Again outside arose the humming, and through the circle that was the entrance to the temple came streaming the globes. They ranged themselves in ranks until they filled the temple. Their whispering grew into a chant, a cadenced whispering chant that rose and fell, rose and fell, while to its rhythm the globes lifted and sank, lifted and sank.

"All the night the lights came and went; and all that night the chant sounded as they rose and fell. At the last I felt myself only an atom of consciousness in the sea of that whispering; an atom that rose and fell with the bowing globes.

"I tell you that even my heart pulsed in unison with them! And the red glow faded, the lights streamed out; the whispering died. I was again alone, and I knew that again day had begun in my own world.

"I slept. When I awoke I found beside the pillar another bowl of the white liquid. I scrutinized the chain that held me to the altar. I began to rub two of the links together. I did this for hours. When the red began to thicken there was a ridge worn in the links. Hope rushed up within me. There was, then, a chance to escape.

"With the thickening the lights came again. All through that night the whispering chant sounded, and the globes rose and fell. The chant seized me. It pulsed through me until every nerve and muscle quivered to it. My lips began to quiver. They strove like a man trying to cry out in a nightmare. And at last they, too, were whispering—whispering the evil chant of the people of the pit. My body bowed in unison with the lights.

"I was—God forgive me!—in movement and sound, one with these nameless things, while my soul sank back sick with horror, but powerless. And as I whispered I—saw *them*!

"Saw the things under the lights. Great transparent snail-like bodies—dozens of waving tentacles stretching from them; little round gaping mouths under the luminous, seeing globes. They were like specters of inconceivably monstrous slugs! And as I stared, still bowing and whispering, the dawn came, and they streamed to and through the entrance. They did not crawl or walk—they floated! They floated and were—gone!

"I did not sleep. I worked all that day at my chain. By the thickening of the red I had worn it a sixth through. And all that night, under their spell, I whispered and bowed with the pit people, joining in their chant to the thing that brooded above me!

"Twice again the red thickened and lessened and the chant held me. And then, on the morning of the fifth day, I broke the worn links. I was free! I ran to the stairway. With eyes closed I rushed up and past the unseen horror behind the altar-ledge and was out upon the bridge. I crossed the span and began the ascent of the stairway.

"Can you think what it is to climb straight up the verge of a cleft-world—with hell behind you? Well—worse than hell was behind me, and terror rode.

"The city of the pit had long been lost in the blue haze before I knew that I could climb no more. My heart beat upon my ears like a sledge. I fell before one of the little caves, feeling that here at last was sanctuary. I crept far back within it and waited for the haze to thicken. Almost at once it did so, and from far below me came a vast and angry murmur. Crouching at the back of the cave, I saw a swift light go shooting up through the blue haze, then die down and break, and as it dimmed and broke I saw myriads of the globes that are the eyes of the pit people swing downward into the abyss. Again and again the light pulsed, and the globes rose with it and fell.

"They were hunting me! They knew I must be somewhere still on the stairway, or, if hiding below, I must some time take to the stairway to escape. The whispering grew louder, more insistent.

"There began to pulse through me a dreadful desire to join in the whispering as I had done in the temple. Something told me that if I did, the sculptured figures could no longer save me; that I would go out and down again into the temple forever! I bit my lips through and through to still them, and all that night the beam shot up through the abyss, the globes swung, and the whispering sounded—and I prayed to the power of the caves and the sculptured figures that still had power to guard them."

He paused—his strength was going.

Then almost in a whisper: "I thought, what were the people who had carved them? Why had they built their city around the verge, and why had they set that stairway in the pit? What had they been to the things that dwelt at the bottom, and what use had the things been to them that they should live beside their dwelling-place? That there had been some purpose was certain. No work so prodigious as the stairway would have been undertaken otherwise. But what was the purpose? And why was it that those who had dwelt about the abyss had passed away ages gone and the dwellers in the abyss still lived?"

He looked at us: "I could find no answer. I wonder if even when I am dead I shall know? I doubt it.

"Dawn came as I wondered, and with it—silence. I drank what was left of the liquid in my canteen, crept from the cave, and began to climb again. That afternoon my legs gave out. I tore off my shirt and made from it pads for my knees and coverings for my hands. I crawled upward. I crawled up and up. And again I crept into one of the caves and waited until again the blue thickened, the shaft of light shot through it, and the whispering came.

"But now there was a new note in the whispering. It was no longer threatening. It called and coaxed. It—drew.

"A terror gripped me. There had come upon me a mighty desire to leave the cave and go out where the lights swung; to let them do with me what they pleased, carry me where they wished. The desire grew. It gained fresh impulse with every rise of the beam, until at last I vibrated with the desire as I had vibrated to the chant in the Temple.

"My body was a pendulum. Up would go the beam, and I would swing toward it! Only my soul kept steady. It held me fast to the floor of the cave, and it placed a hand over my lips to still them. And all that night I fought with my body and lips against the spell of the pit people.

"Dawn came. Again I crept from the cave and faced the stairway. I could not rise. My hands were torn and bleeding, my knees an agony. I forced myself upward step by step.

"After a while my hands became numb, the pain left my knees. They deadened. Step by step my will drove my body upward upon them. And time after time I would sink back within myself to oblivion—only to wake again and find that all the time I had been steadily climbing upward.

"And then—only a dream of crawling up infinite stretches of steps—memories of dull horror while hidden within caves, with thousands of lights pulsing without, and whisperings that called and called me—memory of a time when I awoke to find that my body was obeying the call and had carried me half-way out between the guardians of the portals, while thousands of gleaming globes rested in the blue haze and watched me. Glimpses of bitter fights against sleep, and always—a climb up and up along infinite distances of steps that led from a lost Abaddon to a paradise of the blue sky and open world!

"At last a consciousness of clear sky close above me, the lip of the pit before me. Memory of passing between the great portals of the pit and of steady withdrawal from it. Dreams of giant men with strange, peaked crowns and veiled faces who pushed me onward and onward and onward, and held back pulsing globules of light that sought to draw me back to a gulf wherein planets swam between the branches of red trees that had snakes for crowns.

"And then a long, long sleep—how long God alone knows—in a cleft of rocks; an awakening to see far in the north the beam still rising and falling, the lights still hunting, the whispering high above me calling—and knowledge that no longer had they power to draw me.

"Again crawling on dead arms and legs that moved—that moved—like the Ancient Mariner's ship—without volition of mine. And then—your fire—and this—safety."

The crawling man smiled at us for a moment, then quickly fell asleep.

That afternoon we struck camp, and, carrying the crawling man, started back south. For three days we carried him, and still he slept. And on the third day, still sleeping, he died. We built a great pile of wood and we burned his body, as he had asked. We scattered his ashes about the forest with the ashes of the trees that had consumed him.

It must be a great magic, indeed, that can disentangle those ashes and draw them back in a rushing cloud to the pit he called accursed. I do not think that even the people of the pit have such a spell. No.

But Anderson and I did not return to the five peaks to see. And if the gold does stream out between the five peaks of the Hand Mountain, like putty from a clenched fist—there it may remain for all of us.

THE END

Readers' Vote of Preference

STORY	REMARKS
(1)	....
(2)	....
(3)	....

I do not like these stories:

Why?

(1)	....
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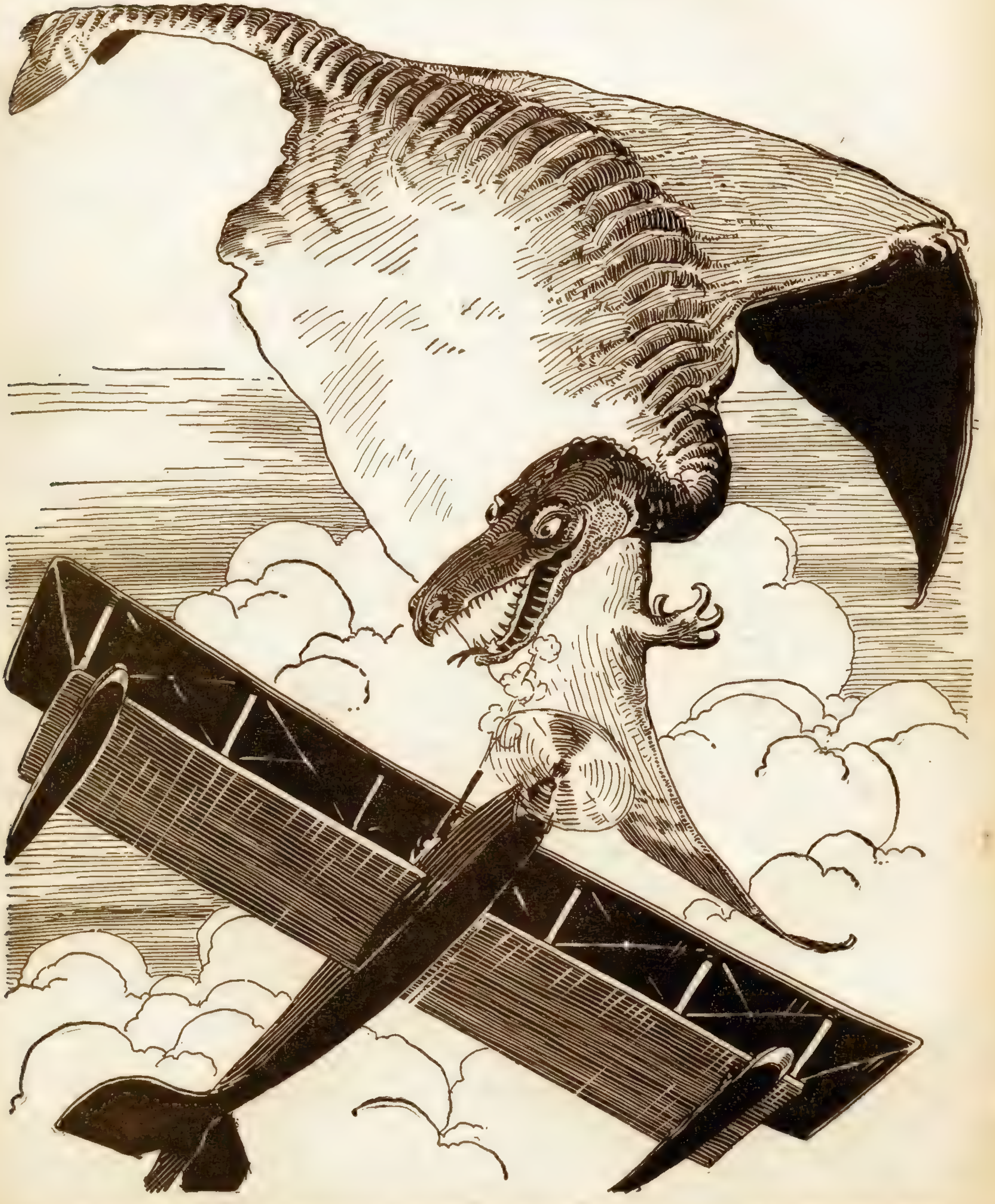
The LAND that TIME FORGOT

By Edgar Rice Burroughs



. . . . and as I glanced up, I saw a most terrific creature swooping down upon me. It must have been fully eighty feet long, with an equal spread of wings. It was hissing frightfully as it came straight down toward the muzzle of the machine-gun.

What Went Before

THE teller of this story discovers a quart thermos bottle turning and twisting in the surf of a small island on Cape Farewell at the southern extremity of Greenland. He rescues it and finds that it contains a manuscript, neatly written and tightly folded, which tells the following story:

A young American, with his Airedale, Nobs, while floating on a raft, apparently the lone survivors of a ship torpedoed by a German submarine, discovers a beautiful young girl, seemingly dead, floating on the sea. He rescues her, she returns to consciousness, and later they both are picked up by an English vessel. Soon that vessel also is attacked by the same submarine, but the English captain tries to maneuver his ship to safety and a battle ensues. The ship sinks, but the crew, together with the American and the girl, Lys La Rue, gain control of the submarine and the Germans. Because it is a German submarine, no neutral or friendly boat will answer their call for help, and naturally they ask for none from a German ship.

Benson, who later confesses himself a traitor to the group, manipulates the compass so that they swerve far from their intended course and finally find themselves near an island, which they decide must be Caprona. On account of its tremendous inacessible cliffs, they cannot gain access to the interior. After much investigation and searching, they discover what seems a subterranean river. They submerge and soon find themselves in an open interior sea. Because they are in a submarine, they are able to go with comparative safety past the monstrous sea and air reptiles, which are plentiful and dangerous in warmer waters.

They soon come to what seems a good landing place and an advance party lands to find a good camping place. They meet with a band of beings, closely resembling the Neanderthal man, who are quickly scared off by the sound of the dicharging rifle. One, a little more highly developed, is captured and brought back to the party. They soon learn something of his language and find him a great help around the island while they are building their camp.

Later, some of the group discover oil and the Germans are permitted to stay on the grounds, well provisioned and with plenty of ammunition, while they are refining the oil. When they have enough for their purposes, they surreptitiously return to the submarine and start for home, leaving the others stranded on the island.

Ahm, the Neanderthal man, tells of the "evolution" of his people—a process of graduation, whereby each one leaves his tribe and goes to the next one somewhat higher in the stage of development, "when the call comes." He expects some day to become a Galu—the highest stage, most nearly approximating the civilized man.

One morning, Lys La Rue fails to appear and Ahm has disappeared. Bowen Tyler, the young American, alarmed, goes to Lys' room and finds her gone, apparently having been kidnapped. He immediately makes preparations to attempt a search and a rescue.

THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Part II

CHAPTER VIII

IT WAS a sad leave-taking as in silence I shook hands with each of the three remaining men. Even poor Nobs appeared dejected as we quit the compound and set out upon the well-marked spoor of the abductor. Not once did I turn my eyes backward toward Fort Dinosaur. I have not looked upon it since—nor in all likelihood shall I ever look upon it again. The trail led northwest until it reached the western end of the sandstone cliffs to the north of the fort; there it ran into a well-defined path which wound northward into a country we had not as yet explored. It was a beautiful, gently rolling country, broken by occasional outcroppings of sandstone and by patches of dense forest relieved by open, parklike stretches and broad meadows whereon grazed countless herbivorous animals—red deer, aurochs, and infinite variety of antelope and at least three distinct species of horse, the latter ranging in size from a creature about as large as Nobs to a magnificent animal fourteen to sixteen hands high. These creatures fed together in perfect amity; nor did they show any great indications of terror when Nobs and I approached. They moved out of our way and kept their eyes upon us until we had passed; then they resumed their feeding.

TO try to give you any idea of the second installment in a few lines would be a task akin to giving a resumé of the history of ancient Rome in several paragraphs. It can not be done. Burroughs has such a tremendous imagination, and so many different things happen on almost every page, that he leaves you bewildered at the richness of his imaginative outpouring.

Perhaps the outstanding feature in this installment is the depiction of evolution, which, although it taxes our credulity, nevertheless is not wholly impossible, and it gives us a pretty good insight into a subject that has been much discussed, but which has not made much headway thus far.

The path led straight across the clearing into another forest, lying upon the verge of which I saw a bit of white. It appeared to stand out in marked contrast and incongruity to all its surroundings, and when I stopped to examine it, I found that it was a small strip of muslin—part of the hem of a garment. At once I was all excitement, for I knew that it was a sign left by Lys that she had been carried this way; it was a tiny bit torn from the hem of the undergarment that she wore in lieu of the nightrobes she had lost with the sinking of the liner. Crushing the bit of fabric to my lips, I pressed on even more rapidly than before, because I now knew that I was upon the right trail and that up to this point at least, Lys still had lived.

I made over twenty miles that day, for I was now hardened to fatigue and accustomed to long-distance walking, having spent considerable time hunting and exploring in the immediate vicinity of camp. A dozen times that day was my life threatened by fearsome creatures of the earth or sky, though I could not but note that the farther north I traveled, the fewer were the great dinosaurs, though they still persisted in lesser numbers. On the other hand, the quantity of ruminants and the variety and frequency of carnivorous animals increased. Each square mile of Caspak harbored its terrors.

At intervals along the way I found bits of muslin, and often they reassured me when otherwise I should have been doubtful of the trail to take where two crossed or where there were forks, as occurred at several points. And so, as night was drawing on, I came to the southern end of a line of cliffs loftier than any I had seen before, and as I approached them, there was wafted to my nostrils the pungent aroma of wood-smoke. What could it mean? There could, to my mind, be but a single solution: man abided close by, a higher order of man than we had as yet seen, other than Ahm, the Neanderthal man. I wondered again as I had so many times that day if it had not been Ahm who stole Lys.

Cautiously I approached the flank of the cliffs, where they terminated in an abrupt escarpment as though some all powerful hand had broken off a great section of rock and set it upon the surface of the earth. It was now quite dark, and as I crept around the edge of the cliff, I saw at a little distance a great fire around which were many figures —apparently human figures. Cautioning Nobs to silence, and he had learned many lessons in the value of obedience since we had entered Caspak, I slunk forward, taking advantage of whatever cover I could find, until from behind a bush I could distinctly see the creatures assembled by the fire. They were human and yet not human. I should say that they were a little higher in the scale of evolution than Ahm, possibly occupying a plane of evolution between that of the Neanderthal man and what is known as the Grimaldi race. Their features were distinctly negroid, though their skins were white. A considerable portion of both torso and limbs was covered with short hair, and their physical proportions were in many respects apelike, though not so much so as were Ahm's. They carried themselves in a more erect position, although their arms were considerably longer than those of the Neanderthal man. As I watched them, I saw that they possessed a language, that they had knowledge of fire and that they carried besides the wooden club of Ahm a thing which resembled a crude stone hatchet. Evidently they were very low in the scale of humanity, but they were a step upward from those I had previously seen in Caspak.

Lys Is Found—An Attack and a Deadly Shot

BUT what interested me most was the slender figure of a dainty girl, clad only in a thin bit of muslin which scarce covered her knees—a bit of muslin torn and ragged about the lower hem. It was Lys, and she was alive and so far as I could see, unharmed. A huge brute with thick lips and prognathous jaw stood at her shoulder. He was talking loudly and gesticulating wildly. I was close enough to hear his words, which were similar to the language of Ahm, though much fuller, for there were many words I could not understand. However, I caught the gist of what he was saying —which in effect was that he had found and captured this Galu, that she was his and that he defied anyone to question his right of possession. It appeared to me, as I afterward learned was the fact, that I was witnessing the most primitive of marriage ceremonies. The assembled members of the tribe looked on and listened in a sort of dull and perfunctory apathy, for the speaker was by far the mightiest of the clan. There seemed no one to dispute his claims when he said, or rather shouted, in stentorian tones: "I am Tsa. This is my she. Who wishes her more than Tsa?"

"I do," I said in the language of Ahm, and I stepped out into the firelight before them. Lys gave a little cry of joy and started toward me, but Tsa grasped her arm and dragged her back.

"Who are you?" shrieked Tsa. "I kill! I kill! I kill!"

"The she is mine," I replied, "and I have come to claim her. I kill if you do not let her come to me." And I raised my pistol to a level with his heart. Of course, the creature had no conception of the purpose of the strange little implement which I was poking toward him. With a sound that was half human and half the growl of a wild beast, he sprang toward me. I aimed at his heart and fired, and as he sprawled headlong to the ground, the others of his tribe, overcome by fright at the report of the pistol, scattered toward the cliffs—while Lys, with outstretched arms, ran toward me.

As I crushed her to me, there rose from the black night behind us and then to our right and to our left a series of frightful screams and shrieks, bellowings, roars and growls. It was the night-life of this jungle world coming into its own —the huge, carnivorous nocturnal beasts which make the nights of Caspak hideous. A shuddering sob ran through Lys' figure. "O God," she cried, "give me the strength to endure, for his sake!" I saw that she was upon the verge of a breakdown, after all that she must have passed through of fear and horror that day, and I tried to quiet and reassure her as best I might; but even to me the future looked most unpromising, for what chance of life had we against the frightful hunters of the night who even now were prowling closer to us?

Now I turned to see what had become of the tribe, and in the fitful glare of the fire I perceived that the face of the cliff was pitted with large holes into which the man-things were clambering. "Come," I said to Lys, "we must follow them. We cannot last a half-hour out here. We must find a cave." Already we could see the blazing green eyes of the hungry carnivora. I seized a brand from the fire and hurled it out into the night, and there came back an answering chorus of savage and rageful protest; but the eyes vanished for a short time. Selecting a burning branch for each of us, we advanced toward the cliffs, where we were met by angry threats.

"They will kill us," said Lys. "We may as well keep on in search of another refuge."

"They will not kill us so surely as will those others out there," I replied. "I am going to seek shelter in one of these caves; nor will the man-things prevent." And I kept on in the direction of the cliff's base. A huge creature stood upon a ledge and brandished his stone hatchet. "Come and I will kill you and take the she," he boasted.

"You saw how Tsa fared when he would have kept my she," I replied in his own tongue. "Thus will you fare and all your fellows if you do not permit us to come in peace among you out of the dangers of the night."

"Go north," he screamed. "Go north among the Galus, and we will not harm you. Some day will we be Galus; but now we are not. You do not belong among us. Go away or we will kill you. The she may remain if she is afraid, and we will keep her; but the he must depart."

"The he won't depart," I replied, and approached still nearer. Rough and narrow ledges formed by nature gave access to the upper caves. A man might scale them if unhampered and unhindered, but to clamber upward in the face of a belligerent tribe of half-men and with a girl to assist was beyond my capability.

"I do not fear you," screamed the creature. "You were close to Tsa; but I am far above you. You cannot harm me as you harmed Tsa. Go away!"

Cave Dwellers

I PLACED a foot upon the lowest ledge and clambered upward, reaching down and pulling Lys to my side. Already I felt safer. Soon we would be out of danger of the beasts again closing in upon us. The man above us raised his stone hatchet above his head and leaped lightly down to meet us. His position above me gave him a great advantage, or at least so he probably thought, for he came with every show of confidence. I hated to do it, but there seemed no other way, and so I shot him down as I had shot down Tsa.

"You see," I cried to his fellows, "that I can kill you wherever you may be. A long way off I can kill you as well as I can kill you near by. Let us come among you in peace. I will not harm you if you do not harm us. We will take a cave high up. Speak!"

"Come, then," said one. "If you will not harm us, you may come. Take Tsa's hole, which lies above you."

The creature showed us the mouth of a black cave, but he kept at a distance while he did it, and Lys followed me as I crawled in to explore. I had matches with me, and in the light of one I found a small cavern with a flat roof and floor which followed the cleavage of the strata. Pieces of the roof had fallen at some long-distant date, as was evidenced by the depth of the filth and rubble in which they were embedded. Even a superficial examination revealed the fact that nothing had ever been attempted that might have improved the habitability of the cave; nor, should I judge, had it ever been cleaned out. With considerable difficulty I loosened some of the larger pieces of broken rock which littered the floor and placed them as a barrier before the doorway. It was too dark to do more than this. I then gave Lys a piece of dried meat, and sitting inside the entrance, we dined as must have some of our ancient forbears at the dawning of the age of man, while from below the open diapason of the savage night rose weird and horrifying to our ears. In the light of the great fire still burning we could see huge, skulking forms, and in the blacker background countless flaming eyes.

Lys shuddered, and I put my arm around her and drew her to me; and thus we sat throughout the hot night. She told me of her abduction and of the fright she had undergone, and together we thanked God that she had come through unharmed, because the great brute had not dared to pause along the danger-infested way. She said that they had but just reached the cliffs when I arrived, for on several occasions her captor had been forced to take to the trees with her to escape the clutches of some hungry cave-lion or saber-tooth tiger, and that twice they had been obliged to remain for considerable periods before the beasts had retired.

Nobs, by dint of much scrambling and one or two narrow escapes from death, had managed to follow us up the cliff and was now curled between me and the doorway, having devoured a piece of the dried meat, which he seemed to relish immensely. He was the first to fall asleep; but I imagine we must have followed suit soon, for we were both tired. I had laid aside my ammunition-belt and rifle, though both were close beside me; but my pistol I kept in my lap beneath my hand. However, we were not disturbed during the night, and when I awoke, the sun was shining on the tree-tops in the distance. Lys' head had drooped to my breast, and my arm was still about her.

Shortly afterward Lys awoke, and for a moment she could not seem to comprehend her situation. She looked at me and then turned and glanced at my arm about her, and then she seemed quite suddenly to realize the scantiness of her apparel and drew away, covering her face with her palms and blushing furiously. I drew her back toward me and kissed her, and then she threw her arms about my neck and wept softly in mute surrender to the inevitable.

The Bathers

IT was an hour later before the tribe began to stir about. We watched them from our "apartment," as Lys called it. Neither men nor women wore any sort of clothing or ornaments, and they all seemed to be about of an age; nor were there any babies or children among them. This was, to us, the strangest and most inexplicable of facts, but it recalled to us that though we had seen many of the lesser developed wild people of Caspak, we had never yet seen a child or an old man or old woman.

After a while they became less suspicious of us and then quite friendly in their brutish way. They picked at the fabric of our clothing, which seemed to interest them, and examined my rifle and pistol and the ammunition in the belt around my waist. I showed them the thermos-bottle, and when I poured a little water from it, they were delighted, thinking that it was a spring which I carried about with me—a never-failing source of water supply.

One thing we both noticed among their other characteristics: they never laughed or smiled; and then we remembered that Ahm had never done so, either. I asked them if they knew Ahm; but they said they did not.

One of them said: "Back there we may have known him." And he jerked his head to the south.

"You came from back there?" I asked. He looked at me in surprise.

"We all come from there," he said. "After a while we go there." And this time he jerked his head toward the north. "Be Galus," he concluded.

Many times now had we heard this reference to becoming Galus. Ahm had spoken of it many times. Lys and I decided that it was a sort of original religious conviction, as much a part of them as their instinct for self-preservation—a primal acceptance of a hereafter and a holier state. It was a brilliant theory, but it was all wrong. I know it now, and how far we were from guessing the wonderful, the miraculous, the gigantic truth which even yet I may only guess at—the thing that sets Caspak apart from all the rest of the world far more definitely than her isolated geographic position or her impregnable barrier of giant cliffs. If I could live to return to civilization, I should have meat for the clergy and the layman to chew upon for years—and for the evolutionists, too.

After breakfast the men set out to hunt, while the women went to a large pool of warm water covered with a green scum and filled with billions of tadpoles. They waded in to where the water was about a foot deep and lay down in the mud. They remained there from one to two hours and then returned to the cliff. While we were with them, we saw this same thing repeated every morning; but though we asked them why they did it we could get no reply which was intelligible to us. All they vouchsafed by way of explanation was the single word *Ata*. They tried to get Lys to go in with them and could not understand why she refused. After the first day I went hunting with the men, leaving my pistol and Nobs with Lys, but she never had to use them, for no reptile or beast ever approached the pool while the women were there—nor, so far as we know, at other times. There was no spoor of wild beast in the soft mud along the banks, and the water certainly didn't look fit to drink.

This tribe lived largely upon the smaller animals which they bowled over with their stone hatchets after making a wide circle about their quarry and driving it so that it had to pass close to one of their number. The little horses and the smaller antelope they secured in sufficient numbers to support life, and they also ate numerous varieties of fruits and vegetables. They never brought in more than sufficient food for their immediate needs; but why bother? The food problem of Caspak is not one to cause worry to her inhabitants.

Lost in Caspak A Recent Grave

THE fourth day Lys told me that she thought she felt equal to attempting the return journey on the morrow, and so I set out for the hunt in high spirits, for I was anxious to return to the fort and learn if Bradley and his party had returned and what had been the result of his expedition. I also wanted to relieve their minds as to Lys and myself, as I knew that they must already have given us up for dead. It was a cloudy day, though warm, as it always is in Caspak. It seemed odd to realize that just a few miles away winter lay upon the storm-tossed ocean, and that snow might be falling all about Caprona; but no snow could ever penetrate the damp, hot atmosphere of the great crater.

We had to go quite a bit farther than usual before we could surround a little bunch of antelope, and as I was helping drive them, I saw a fine red deer a couple of hundred yards behind me. He must have been asleep in the long grass, for I saw him rise and look about him in a bewildered way, and then I raised my gun and let him have it. He dropped, and I ran forward to finish him with the long thin knife, which one of the men had given me; but just as I reached him, he staggered to his feet and ran on for another two hundred yards—when I dropped him again. Once more was this repeated before I was able to reach him and cut his throat; then I looked around for my companions, as I wanted them to come and carry the meat home; but I could see nothing of them. I called a few times and waited, but there was no response and no one came. At last I became disgusted, and cutting off all the meat that I could conveniently carry, I set off in the direction of the cliffs. I must have gone about a mile before the truth dawned upon me—I was lost, hopelessly lost.

The entire sky was still completely blotted out by dense clouds; nor was there any landmark visible by which I might have taken my bearings. I went on in the direction I thought was south but which I now imagine must have been about due north, without detecting a single familiar object. In a dense wood I suddenly stumbled upon a thing which at first filled me with hope and later with the most utter despair and dejection. It was a little mound of new-turned earth sprinkled with flowers long since withered, and at one end was a flat slab of standstone stuck in the ground. It was a grave, and it meant for me that I had at last stumbled into a country inhabited by human beings. I would find them; they would direct me to the cliffs; perhaps they would accompany me and take us back with them to their abodes—to the abodes of men and women like ourselves. My hopes and my imagination ran riot in the few yards I had to cover to reach that lonely grave and stoop that I might read the rude characters scratched upon the simple headstone. This is what I read:

HERE LIES JOHN TIPPET
ENGLISHMAN
KILLED BY TYRANNOSAURUS
10 SEP., A. D. 1916
R. I. P.

Tippet! It seemed incredible. Tippet lying here in this gloomy wood! Tippet dead! He had been a good man, but the personal loss was not what affected me. It was the fact that this silent grave gave evidence that Bradley had come this far upon his expedition and that he too probably was lost, for it was not our intention that he should be long gone. If I had stumbled upon the grave of one of the party, was it not within reason to believe that the bones of the others lay scattered somewhere near?

CHAPTER IX

AS I stood looking down upon that sad and lonely mound, wrapped in the most dismal of reflections and premonitions, I was suddenly seized from behind and thrown to earth. As I fell, a warm body fell on top of me, and hands grasped my arms and legs. When I could look up, I saw a number of giant figures pinioning me down, while others stood about surveying me. Here again was a new type of man—a higher type than the primitive tribe I had just quitted. They were a taller people, too, with better-shaped skulls and more intelligent faces. There were less of the ape characteristics about their features, and less of the negroid, too. They carried weapons, stone-shod spears, stone knives, and hatchets—and they wore ornaments and breechcloths—the former of feathers worn in their hair and the latter made of a single snake-skin cured with the head on, the head depending to their knees.

Of course I did not take in all these details upon the instant of my capture, for I was busy with other matters. Three of the warriors were sitting upon me, trying to hold me down by main strength and awkwardness, and they were having their hands full in the doing, I can tell you. I don't like to appear conceited, but I may as well admit that I am proud of my strength and the science I have acquired and developed in the directing of it—that and my horsemanship I always have been proud of. And now, that day, all the long hours that I had put into careful study, practice and training brought me in two or three minutes a full return upon my investment. Californians, as a rule, are familiar with ju-jutsu, and I especially had made a study of it for several years, both at school and in the gym of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, while recently I had had, in my employ, a Jap who was a wonder at the art.

It took me just about thirty seconds to break the elbow of one of my assailants, trip another and send him stumbling backward among his fellows, and throw the third completely over my head in such a way that when he fell his neck was broken. In the instant that the others of the party stood in mute and inactive surprise, I unslung my rifle—which, carelessly, I had been carrying across my back; and when they charged, as I felt they would, I put a bullet in the forehead of one of them. This stopped them all temporarily—not the death of their fellow, but the report of the rifle, the first they had ever heard. Before they were ready to attack me again, one of them spoke in a commanding tone to his fellows, in a language similar to but still more comprehensive than that of the tribe to the south, as theirs was more complete than Ahm's. He commanded them to stand back and then he advanced and addressed me.

He asked me who I was, from whence I came and what my intentions were. I replied that I was a stranger in Caspak, that I was lost and that my only desire was to find my way back to my companions. He asked where they were and I told him toward the south somewhere, using the Caspakian phrase which, literally translated, means "toward the beginning." His surprise showed upon his face before he voiced it in words. "There are no Galus there," he said. "You have lied. The Galus have turned you out."

"I tell you," I said angrily, "that I am from another country, far from Caspak, far beyond the high cliffs. I do not know who the Galus may be; I have never seen them. This is the farthest north I have been. Look at me—look at my clothing and my weapons. Have you ever seen a Galu or any other creature in Caspak who possessed such things?"

He had to admit that he had not, and also that he was much interested in me, my rifle and the way I had handled his three warriors. Finally he became half convinced that I was telling him the truth and offered to aid me if I would show him how I had thrown the man over my head and also make him a present of the "bang-spear," as he called it. I refused to give him my rifle, but promised to show him the trick he wished to learn if he would guide me in the right direction. He told me that he would do so tomorrow, that it was too late today and that I might come to their village and spend the night with them. I was loath to lose so much time; but the fellow was obdurate, and so I accompanied them. The two dead men they left where they had fallen, nor gave them a second glance—thus cheap is life upon Caspak.

Tracing the Evolution of the Races of Man

THESE people also were cave-dwellers, but their caves showed the result of a higher intelligence that brought them a step nearer to civilized man than the tribe next "toward the beginning." The interiors of their caverns were cleared of rubbish, though still far from clean, and they had pallets of dried grasses covered with the skins of leopard, lynx, and bear, while before the entrances were barriers of stone and small, rudely circular stone ovens. The walls of the cavern to which I was conducted were covered with drawings scratched upon the sandstone. There were the outlines of giant red deer, of mammoths, of tigers and other beasts. Here, as in the last tribe, there were no children or any old people. The men of this tribe had two names, or rather names of two syllables, and their language contained words of two syllables; whereas in the tribe of Tsa the words were all of a single syllable, with the exception of a very few like *Atis* and *Galus*. The chief's name was To-jo, and his household consisted of seven females and himself. These women were much more comely, or rather less hideous than those of Tsa's people; one of them, even, was almost pretty, being less hairy and having a rather nice skin, with high coloring.

They were all much interested in me and examined my clothing and equipment carefully, handling and feeling and smelling of each article. I learned from them that their people were known as Band-lu, or spear-men; Tsa's race was called Sto-lu—hatchet-men. Below these in the scale of evolution came the Bo-lu, or club-men, and then the

Alus, who had no weapons and no language. In that word I recognized what to me seemed the most remarkable discovery I had made upon Caprona, for unless it were mere coincidence, I had come upon a word that had been handed down from the beginning of spoken language upon earth, been handed down for millions of years, perhaps, with little change. It was the sole remaining thread of the ancient woof of a dawning culture which had been woven when Caprona was a fiery mount upon a great land-mass teeming with life. It linked the unfathomable then to the eternal now. And yet it may have been pure coincidence; my better judgment tells me that it is coincidence that in Caspak the term for speechless man is *Alus*, and in the outer world of our own today it is *Alalus*, borrowed from the Greek by Haeckel.

The comely woman of whom I spoke was called So-ta, and she took such a lively interest in me that To-jo finally objected to her attentions, emphasizing his displeasure by knocking her down and kicking her into a corner of the cavern. I leaped between them while he was still kicking her, and obtaining a quick hold upon him, dragged him screaming with pain from the cave. There I made him promise not to hurt the she again, upon pain of worse punishment. So-ta gave me a grateful look; but To-jo and the balance of his women were sullen and ominous.

Later in the evening So-ta confided to me that she was soon to leave the tribe.

"So-ta soon be Kro-lu," she confided in a low whisper. I asked her what a Kro-lu might be, and she tried to explain, but I do not yet know if I understood her. From her gestures I deduced that the Kro-lus were a people who were armed with bows and arrows, had vessels in which to cook their food and huts of some sort in which they lived, and were accompanied by animals. It was all very fragmentary and vague, but the idea seemed to be that the Kro-lus were a more advanced people than the Band-lus. I pondered a long time upon all that I had heard, before sleep came to me. I tried to find some connection between these various races that would explain the universal hope which each of them harbored that some day they would become Galus. So-ta had given me a suggestion; but the resulting idea was so weird that I could scarce even entertain it; yet it coincided with Ahm's expressed hope, with the various steps in evolution I had noted in the several tribes I had encountered and with the range of type represented in each tribe. For example, among the Band-lu were such types as So-ta, who seemed to me to be the highest in the scale of evolution, and To-jo, who was just a shade nearer the ape, while there were others who had flatter noses, faces more prognathous and hairier bodies. The question puzzled me. Possibly in the outer world the answer to it is locked in the bosom of the Sphinx. Who knows? I do not.

Thinking the thoughts of a lunatic or a dope-fiend, I fell asleep; and when I awoke, my hands and feet were securely tied and my weapons had been taken from me. How they did it without awakening me I cannot tell you. It was humiliating, but it was true. To-jo stood above me. The early light of morning was dimly filtering into the cave.

A Prisoner and an Escape

"TELL me," he demanded, "how to throw a man over my head and break his neck, for I am going to kill you, and I wish to know this thing before you die."

Of all the ingenuous declarations I have ever heard, this one copped the proverbial bun. It struck me as so funny that, even in the face of death, I laughed. Death, I may remark here, had, however, lost much of its terror for me. I had become a disciple of Lys' fleeting philosophy of the valuelessness of human life. I realized that she was quite right—that we were but comic figures hopping from the cradle to the grave, of interest to practically no other created thing than ourselves and our few intimates.

Behind To-jo stood So-ta. She raised one hand with the palm toward me—the Caspakian equivalent of a negative shake of the head.

"Let me think about it," I parried, and To-jo said that he would wait until night. He would give me a day to think it over; then he left, and the women left—the men for the hunt, and the women, as I later learned from So-ta, for the warm pool where they immersed their bodies as did the shes of the Sto-lu. "Ata," explained So-ta, when I questioned her as to the purpose of this matutinal rite; but that was later.

I must have lain there bound and uncomfortable for two or three hours when at last So-ta entered the cave. She carried a sharp knife—mine, in fact, and with it she cut my bonds.

"Come!" she said. "So-ta will go with you back to the Galus. It is time that So-ta left the Band-lu. Together we will go to the Kro-lu, and after that the Galus. To-jo will kill you tonight. He will kill So-ta if he knows that So-ta aided you. We will go together."

"I will go with you to the Kro-lu," I replied, "but then I must return to my own people 'toward the beginning.'"

"You cannot go back," she said. "It is forbidden. They would kill you. Thus far have you come—there is no returning."

"But I must return," I insisted. "My people are there. I must return and lead them in this direction."

She insisted, and I insisted; but at last we compromised. I was to escort her as far as the country of the Kro-lu and then I was to go back after my own people and lead them north into a land where the dangers were fewer and the people less murderous. She brought me all my belongings that had been filched from me—rifle, ammunition, knife, and thermos bottle, and then hand in hand we descended the cliff and set off toward the north.

For three days we continued upon our way, until we arrived outside a village of thatched huts just at dusk. So-ta said that she would enter alone; I must not be seen if I did not intend to remain, as it was forbidden that one should return and live after having advanced this far. So she left me. She was a dear girl and a stanch and true comrade—more like a man than a woman. In her simple barbaric way she was both refined and chaste. She had been the wife of To-jo. Among the Kro-lu she would find another mate after the manner of the strange Caspakian world; but she told me very frankly that whenever I returned, she would leave her mate and come to me, as she preferred me above all others. I was becoming a ladies' man after a lifetime of bashfulness!

At the outskirts of the village I left her without even seeing the sort of people who inhabited it, and set off through the growing darkness toward the south. On the third day I made a detour westward to avoid the country of the Band-lu, as I did not care to be detained by a meeting with To-jo. On the sixth day I came to the cliffs of the Sto-lu, and my heart beat fast as I approached them, for here was Lys. Soon I would hold her tight in my arms again; soon her warm lips would merge with mine. I felt sure that she was still safe among the hatchet people, and I was already picturing the joy and the love-light in her eyes when she should see me once more as I emerged from the last clump of trees and almost ran toward the cliffs.

Another Grave

IT was late in the morning. The women must have returned from the pool; yet as I drew near, I saw no sign of life whatever. "They have remained longer," I thought; but when I was quite close to the base of the cliffs, I saw that which dashed my hopes and my happiness to earth. Strewn along the ground were a score of mute and horrible suggestions of what had taken place during my absence—bones picked clean of flesh, the bones of manlike creatures, the bones of many of the tribe of Sto-lu; and in no cave was there sign of life.

Closely I examined the ghastly remains fearful each instant that I should find the dainty skull that would shatter my happiness for life; but though I searched diligently, picking up every one of the twenty-odd skulls, I found none that was not the skull of a creature but slightly removed from the ape. Hope, then, still lived. For another three days I searched north and south, east and west for the hatchet-men of Caspak; but never a trace of them did I find. It was raining most of the time now, and the weather was as near cold as it ever seems to get on Caprona.

At last I gave up the search and set off toward Fort Dinosaur. For a week—a week filled with the terrors and dangers of a primeval world—I pushed on in the direction I thought was south. The sun never shone; the rain scarcely ever ceased falling. The beasts I met with were fewer in number but infinitely more terrible in temper; yet I lived on until there came to me the realization that I was hopelessly lost, that a year of sunshine would not again give me my bearings; and while I was cast down by this terrifying knowledge, the knowledge that I never again could find my Lys, I stumbled upon another grave—the grave of William James, with its little crude headstone and its scrawled characters recording that he had died upon the 13th of September—killed by a saber-tooth tiger.

I think that I almost gave up then. Never in my life have I felt more hopeless or helpless or alone. I was lost. I could not find my friends. I did not even know that they still lived; in fact, I could not bring myself to believe that they did. I was sure that Lys was dead. I wanted myself to die, and yet I clung to life—useless and hopeless and harrowing a thing as it had become. I clung to life because some ancient, reptilian forbear had clung to life and transmitted to me through the ages the most powerful motive that guided his minute brain—the motive of self-preservation.

At last I came to the great barrier-cliffs; and after three days of mad effort—of maniacal effort—I scaled them. I built crude ladders; I wedged sticks in narrow fissures; I chopped toe-holds and finger-holds with my long knife; but at last I scaled them. Near the summit I came upon a huge cavern. It is the abode of some mighty winged creature of the Triassic—or rather it was. Now it is mine. I slew the thing and took its abode. I reached the summit and looked out upon the broad gray terrible Pacific of the far-southern winter. It was cold up there. It is cold here today; yet here I sit watching, watching, watching for the thing I know will never come—for a sail.

CHAPTER X

ONCE a day I descend to the base of the cliff and hunt, and fill my stomach with water from a clear cold spring. I have three gourds which I fill with water and take back to my cave against the long nights. I have fashioned a spear and a bow and arrow, that I may conserve my ammunition, which is running low. My clothes are worn to shreds. Tomorrow I shall discard them for leopard-skins which I have tanned and sewn into a garment strong and warm. It is cold up here. I have a fire burning, and I sit bent over it while I write; but I am safe here. No other living creature ventures to the chill summit of the barrier cliffs. I am safe, and I am alone with my sorrows and my remembered joys—but without hope. It is said that hope springs eternal in the human breast; but there is none in mine.

I am about done. Presently I shall fold these pages and push them into my thermos bottle. I shall cork it and screw the cap down tight, and then I shall hurl it as far out into the sea as my strength will permit. The wind is off-shore; the tide is running out; perhaps it will be carried into one of those numerous ocean-currents which sweep perpetually from pole to pole and from continent to continent, to be deposited at last upon some inhabited shore. If fate is kind and this does happen, then, *for God's sake, come and get me!*

It was a week ago that I wrote the preceding paragraph, which I thought would end the written record of my life upon Caprona. I had paused to put a new point on my quill and stir the crude ink (which I made by crushing a black variety of berry and mixing it with water) before attaching my signature, when faintly from the valley below came an unmistakable sound which brought me to my feet, trembling with excitement, to peer eagerly downward from my dizzy ledge. How full of meaning that sound was to me you may guess when I tell you that it was the report of a firearm! For a moment my gaze traversed the landscape beneath until it was caught and held by four figures near the base of the cliff—a human figure held at bay by three hyaenodons, those ferocious and bloodthirsty wild dogs of the Eocene. A fourth beast lay dead or dying near by.

I couldn't be sure, looking down from above as I was; but yet I trembled like a leaf in the intuitive belief that it was Lys, and my judgment served to confirm my wild desire, for whoever it was carried only a pistol, and thus had Lys been armed. The first wave of sudden joy which surged through me was short-lived in the face of the swift-following conviction that the one who fought below was already doomed. Luck and only luck it must have been which had permitted that first shot to lay low one of the savage creatures, for even such a heavy weapon as my pistol is entirely inadequate against even the lesser carnivora of Caspak. In a moment the three would charge! a futile shot would but tend more greatly to enrage the one it chanced to hit; and then the three would drag down the little human figure and tear it to pieces.

And maybe it was Lys! My heart stood still at the thought, but mind and muscle responded to the quick decision I was forced to make. There was but a single hope—a single chance—and I took it. I raised my rifle to my shoulder and took careful aim. It was a long shot, a dangerous shot, for unless one is accustomed to it, shooting from a considerable altitude is most deceptive work. There is, though, something about marksmanship which is quite beyond all scientific laws.

Upon no other theory can I explain my marksmanship of that moment. Three times my rifle spoke—three quick, short syllables of death. I did not take conscious aim; and yet at each report a beast crumpled in its tracks!

From my ledge to the base of the cliff is a matter of several thousand feet of dangerous climbing; yet I venture to say that the first ape from whose loins my line has descended never could have equaled the speed with which I literally dropped down the face of that rugged escarpment. The last two hundred feet is over a steep incline of loose rubble to the valley bottom, and I had just reached the top of this when there arose to my ears an agonized cry—"Bowen! Bowen! Quick, my love, quick!"

Lys Found and in Danger

I HAD been too much occupied with the dangers of the descent to glance down toward the valley; but that cry which told me that it was indeed Lys, and that she was again in danger, brought my eyes quickly upon her in time to see a hairy, burly brute seize her and start off at a run toward the near-by wood. From rock to rock, chamoislike, I leaped downward toward the valley, in pursuit of Lys and her hideous abductor.

He was heavier than I by many pounds, and so weighted by the burden he carried that I easily overtook him; and at last he turned, snarling, to face me. It was Kho of the tribe of Tsa, the hatchet-men. He recognized me, and with a low growl he threw Lys aside and came for me. "The she is mine," he cried. "I kill! I kill!"

I had to discard my rifle before I commenced the rapid descent of the cliff, so that now I was armed only with a hunting knife, and this I whipped from its scabbard as Kho leaped toward me. He was a mighty beast, mightily muscled, and the urge that has made males fight since the dawn of life on earth filled him with blood-lust and the thirst to slay; but not one whit less did it fill me with the same primal passions. Two abysmal beasts sprang at each other's throats that day beneath the shadow of earth's oldest cliffs—the man of now and the man-thing of the earliest, forgotten then, imbued by the same deathless passion that has come down unchanged through all the epochs, periods and eras of time from the beginning, and which shall continue to the incalculable end—woman, the imperishable Alpha and Omega of life.

Kho closed and sought my jugular with his teeth. He seemed to forget the hatchet dangling by its aurochs-hide thong at his hip, as I forgot, for the moment, the dagger in my hand. And I doubt not but that Kho would easily have bested me in an encounter of that sort had not Lys' voice awakened within my momentarily reverted brain the skill and cunning of reasoning man. "Bowen!" she cried. "Your knife! Your knife!"

It was enough. It recalled me from the forgotten eon to which my brain had flown and left me once again a modern man battling with a clumsy, unskilled brute. No longer did my jaws snap at the hairy throat before me; but instead my knife sought and found a space between two ribs over the savage heart. Kho voiced a single horrid scream, stiffened spasmodically and sank to the earth. And Lys threw herself into my arms. All the fears and sorrows of the past were wiped away, and once again I was the happiest of men.

With some misgivings I shortly afterward cast my eyes upward toward the precarious ledge which ran before my cave, for it seemed to me quite beyond all reason to expect a dainty modern belle to essay the perils of that frightful climb. I asked her if she thought she could brave the ascent, and she laughted gayly in my face.

"Watch!" she cried, and ran eagerly toward the base of the cliff. Like a squirrel she clambered swiftly aloft, so that I was forced to exert myself to keep pace with her. At first she frightened me; but presently I was aware that she was quite as safe here as I was. When we finally came to my ledge and I again held her in my arms, she recalled to my mind that for several weeks she had been living the life of a cave-girl with the tribe of hatchet-men. They had been driven from their former caves by another tribe which had slain many and carried off quite half the females, and the new cliffs to which they had flown had proven far higher and more precipitous, so that she had become, through necessity, a most practiced climber.

She told me of Kho's desire for her, since all his females had been stolen and of how her life had been a constant nightmare of terror as she sought by night and by day to elude the great brute. For a time Nobs had been all the protection she required; but one day he disappeared—nor has she seen him since. She believes that he was deliberately made away with; and so do I, for we both are sure that he never would have deserted her. With her means of protection gone, Lys was now at the mercy of the hatchet-man; nor was it many hours before he had caught her at the base of the cliff and seized her; but as he bore her triumphantly aloft toward his cave, she had managed to break loose and escape him.

"For three days he has pursued me," she said, "through this horrible world. How I have passed through in safety I cannot guess, or how I have always managed to outdistance him; yet I have done it, until just as you discovered me. Fate was kind to us, Bowen."

I nodded my head in assent and crushed her to me. And then we talked and planned as I cooked antelope-steaks over my fire, and we came to the conclusion that there was no hope of rescue, that she and I were doomed to live and die upon Caprona. Well, it might be worse! I would rather live here always with Lys than to live elsewhere without her; and she, dear girl, says the same of me; but I am afraid of this life for her. It is a hard, fierce, dangerous life, and I shall pray always that we shall be rescued from it—for her sake.

That night the clouds broke, and the moon shone down upon our little ledge; and there, hand in hand, we turned our faces toward heaven and plighted our troth beneath the eyes of God. No human agency could have married us more sacredly than we are wed. We are man and wife, and we are content. If God wills it, we shall live out our lives here. If He wills otherwise, then this manuscript which I shall now consign to the inscrutable forces of the sea shall fall into friendly hands. However, we are each without hope. And so we say good-bye in this, our last message to the world beyond the barrier cliffs.

(*Signed*) Bowen J. Tyler, Jr.
Lys La R. Tyler.

Book II

THE PEOPLE THAT TIME FORGOT

The Adventures of Thomas Billings

CHAPTER I

I AM forced to admit that even though I had traveled a long distance to place Bowen Tyler's manuscript in the hands of his father, I was still a trifle skeptical as to its sincerity, since I could not but recall that it had not been many years since Bowen had been one of the most notorious practical jokers of his alma mater. The truth was that as I sat in the Tyler library at Santa Monica I commenced to feel a trifle foolish and to wish that I had merely forwarded the manuscript by express instead of bearing it personally, for I confess that I do not enjoy being laughed at. I have a well-developed sense of humor—when the joke is not on me.

Mr. Tyler, Sr., was expected almost hourly. The last steamer in from Honolulu had brought information of the date of the expected sailing of his yacht *Toreador*, which was now twenty-four hours overdue. Mr. Tyler's assistant secretary, who had been left at home, assured me that there was no doubt but that the *Toreador* had sailed as promised, since he knew his employer well enough to be positive that nothing short of an act of God would prevent his doing what he had planned to do. I was also aware of the fact that the sending apparatus of the *Toreador's* wireless equipment was sealed, and that it would only be used in event of dire necessity. There was, therefore, nothing to do but wait, and I waited.

We discussed the manuscript and hazarded guesses concerning it and the strange events it narrated. The torpedoing of the liner upon which Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., had taken passage for France to join the American Ambulance was a well-known fact, and I had further substantiated by wire to the New York office of the owners, that a Miss La Rue had been booked for passage. Further, neither she nor Bowen had been mentioned among the list of survivors; nor had the body of either of them been recovered.

Their rescue by the English tug was entirely probable; the capture of the enemy *U*-33 by the tug's crew was not beyond the range of possibility; and their adventures during the perilous cruise which the treachery and deceit of Benson extended until they found themselves in the waters of the far South Pacific with depleted stores and poisoned water-casks, while bordering upon the fantastic, appeared logical enough as narrated, event by event, in the manuscript.

Caprona has always been considered a more or less mythical land, though it is vouched for by an eminent navigator of the eighteenth century; but Bowen's narrative made it seem very real, however many miles of trackless ocean lay between us and it. Yes, that narrative had us guessing. We were agreed that it was most improbable; but neither of us could say that anything which it contained was beyond the range of possibility. The weird flora and fauna of Caspak were as possible under the thick, warm atmospheric conditions of the superheated crater as they were in the Mesozoic era under almost exactly similar conditions, which were then probably world-wide. The assistant secretary had heard of Caproni and his discoveries but admitted that he never had taken much stock in the one or the other. We were agreed that the one statement most difficult of explanation was that which reported the entire absence of human young among the various tribes with which Tyler had had intercourse. This was the one irreconcilable statement of the manuscript. A world of adults! It was impossible.

Planning a Rescue from the Island

WE speculated upon the probable fate of Bradley and his party of English sailors. Tyler had found the graves of two of them; how many more might have perished! And Miss La Rue—could a young girl long have survived the horrors of Caspak after having been separated from all of her own kind? The assistant secretary wondered if Nobs still was with her, and then we both smiled at this tacit acceptance of the truth of the whole uncanny tale.

"I suppose I'm a fool," remarked the assistant secretary; "but by George, I can't help believing it, and I can see that girl now, with the big Airedale at her side protecting her from the terrors of a million years ago. I can visualize the entire scene—the apelike Grimaldi men huddled in their filthy caves; the huge pterodactyls soaring through the heavy air upon their batlike wings; the mighty dinosaurs moving their clumsy hulks beneath the dark shadows of pre-glacial forests—the dragons which we considered myths until science taught us that they were the true recollections of the first man, handed down through countless ages by word of mouth from father to son out of the unrecorded dawn of humanity."

"It is stupendous—if true," I replied. "And to think that possibly they are still there—Tyler and Miss La Rue—surrounded by hideous dangers, and that possibly Bradley still lives, and some of his party! I can't help hoping all the time that Bowen and the girl have found the others; the last that Bowen knew of them, there were six left, all told—the mate Bradley, the engineer Olson, and Wilson, Whitely, Brady and Sinclair. There might be some hope for them if they could join forces; but separated, I'm afraid they couldn't last long.

"If only they hadn't let the German prisoners capture the *U*-33! Bowen should have had better judgment than to have trusted them at all. The chances are von Schoenvorts succeeded in getting safely back to Kiel and is strutting around with an Iron Cross this very minute. With a large supply of oil from the wells they discovered in Caspak, with plenty of water and ample provisions, there is no reason why they couldn't have negotiated the submerged tunnel beneath the barrier cliffs and made good their escape."

"I don't like 'em," said the assistant secretary; "but sometimes you got to hand it to 'em."

"Yes," I growled, "and there's nothing I'd enjoy more than *handing it to them!*" And then the telephone-bell rang.

The assistant secretary answered, and as I watched him, I saw his jaw drop and his face go white. "My God!" he exclaimed as he hung up the receiver as one in a trance. "It can't be!"

"What?" I asked.

"Mr. Tyler is dead," he answered in a dull voice. "He died at sea, suddenly, yesterday."

The next ten days were occupied in burying Mr. Bowen J. Tyler, Sr., and arranging plans for the succor of his son. Mr. Tom Billings, the late Mr. Tyler's secretary, did it all. He is force, energy, initiative and good judgment combined and personified. I never have beheld a more dynamic young man. He handled lawyers, courts and executors as a sculptor handles his modeling clay. He formed, fashioned and forced them to his will. He had been a classmate of Bowen Tyler at college, and a fraternity brother, and before that he had been an impoverished and improvident cow-puncher on one of the great Tyler ranches. Tyler, Sr., had picked him out of thousands of employees and made him; or rather Tyler had given him the opportunity, and then Billings had made himself. Tyler, Jr., as good a judge of men as his father, had taken him into his friendship, and between the two of them they had turned out a man who would have died for a Tyler as quickly as he would have for his flag. Yet there was none of the sycophant or fawner in Billings; ordinarily I do not wax enthusiastic about men, but this man Billings comes as close to my conception of what a regular man should be as any I have ever met. I venture to say that before Bowen J. Tyler sent him to college he had never heard the word *ethics*, and yet I am equally sure that in all his life he never has transgressed a single tenet of the code of ethics of an American gentleman.

Finding Caprona The Seaplane

TEN days after they brought Mr. Tyler's body off the *Toreador*, we steamed out into the Pacific in search of Caprona. There were forty in the party, including the master and crew of the *Toreador;* and Billings the indomitable was in command. We had a long and uninteresting search for Caprona, for the old map upon which the assistant secretary had finally located it was most inaccurate. When its grim walls finally rose out of the ocean's mists before us, we were so far south that it was a question as to whether we were in the South Pacific or the Antarctic. Bergs were numerous, and it was very cold.

All during the trip Billings had steadfastly evaded questions as to how we were to enter Caspak after we had found Caprona. Bowen Tyler's manuscript had made it perfectly evident to all that the subterranean outlet of the Caspakian river was the only means of ingress or egress to the crater world beyond the impregnable cliffs. Tyler's party had been able to navigate this channel because their craft had been a submarine; but the *Toreador* could as easily have flown over the cliffs as sailed under them. Jimmy Hollis and Colin Short whiled away many an hour inventing schemes for surmounting the obstacle presented by the barrier cliffs, and making ridiculous wagers as to which one Tom Billings had in mind; but immediately we were all assured that we had raised Caprona, Billings called us together.

"There was no use in talking about these things," he said, "until we found the island. At best it can be but conjecture on our part until we have been able to scrutinize the coast closely. Each of us has formed a mental picture of the Capronian seacoast from Bowen's manuscript, and it is not likely that any two of these pictures resemble each other, or that any of them resembles the coast as we shall presently find it. I have in view three plans for scaling the cliffs, and the means for carrying out each is in the hold. There is an electric drill with plenty of water-proof cable to reach from the ship's dynamos to the cliff-top when the *Toreador* is anchored at a safe distance from shore, and there is sufficient half-inch iron rod to build a ladder from the base to the top of the cliff. It would be a long, arduous and dangerous work to bore the holes and insert the rungs of the ladder from the bottom upward; yet it can be done.

"I also have a life-saving mortar with which we might be able to throw a line over the summit of the cliffs; but this plan would necessitate one of us climbing to the top with the chances more than even that the line would cut at the summit, or the hooks at the upper end would slip.

"My third plan seems to me the most feasible.

You all saw a number of large, heavy boxes lowered into the hold before we sailed. I know you did, because you asked me what they contained and commented upon the large letter *'H'* which was painted upon each box. These boxes contain the various parts of a hydro-aeroplane. I purpose assembling this upon the strips of beach described in Bowen's manuscript—the beach where he found the dead body of the apelike man—provided there is sufficient space above high water; otherwise we shall have to assemble it on deck and lower it over the side. After it is assembled, I shall carry tackle and ropes to the cliff-top, and then it will be comparatively simple to hoist the search-party and its supplies in safety. Or I can make a sufficient number of trips to land the entire party in the valley beyond the barrier; all will depend, of course, upon what my first reconnaissance reveals."

That afternoon we steamed slowly along the face of Caprona's towering barrier.

"You see now," remarked Billings as we craned our necks to scan the summit thousands of feet above us, "how futile it would have been to waste our time in working out details of a plan to surmount those." And he jerked his thumb toward the cliffs. "It would take weeks, possibly months, to construct a ladder to the top. I had no conception of their formidable height. Our mortar would not carry a line halfway to the crest of the lowest point. There is no use discussing any plan other than the hydro-aeroplane. We'll find the beach and get busy."

Late the following morning the lookout announced that he could discern surf about a mile ahead; and as we approached, we all saw the line of breakers broken by a long sweep of rolling surf upon a narrow beach. The launch was lowered, and five of us made a landing, getting a good ducking in the ice-cold waters in the doing of it; but we were rewarded by the finding of the clean-picked bones of what might have been the skeleton of a high order of ape or a very low order of man, lying close to the base of the cliff. Billings was satisfied, as were the rest of us, that this was the beach mentioned by Bowen, and we further found that there was ample room to assemble the seaplane.

A Disappearance

BILLINGS, having arrived at a decision, lost no time in acting, with the result that before mid-afternoon we had landed all the large boxes marked *"H"* upon the beach, and were busily engaged in opening them. Two days later the plane was assembled and tuned. We loaded tackles and ropes, water, food and ammunition in it, and then we each implored Billings to let us be the one to accompany him. But he would take no one. That was Billings; if there was any especially difficult or dangerous work to be done, that one man could do, Billings always did it himself. If he needed assistance, he never called for volunteers—just selected the man or men he considered best qualified for the duty. He said that he considered the principles underlying all volunteer service fundamentally wrong, and that it seemed to him that calling for volunteers reflected upon the courage and loyalty of the entire command.

We rolled the plane down to the water's edge, and Billings mounted the pilot's seat. There was a moment's delay as he assured himself that he had everything necessary. Jimmy Hollis went over his armament and ammunition to see that nothing had been omitted. Besides pistol and rifle, there was the machine-gun mounted in front of him on the plane, and ammunition for all three. Bowen's account of the terrors of Caspak had impressed us all with the necessity for proper means of defense.

At last all was ready. The motor was started, and we pushed the plane out into the surf. A moment later, and she was skimming seaward. Gently she rose from the surface of the water, executed a wide spiral as she mounted rapidly, circled once far above us and then disappeared over the crest of the cliffs. We all stood silent and expectant, our eyes glued upon the towering summit above us. Hollis, who was now in command, consulted his wrist-watch at frequent intervals.

"Gad," exclaimed Short, "we ought to be hearing from him pretty soon!"

Hollis laughed nervously. "He's been gone only ten minutes," he announced.

"Seems like an hour," snapped Short. "What's that? Did you hear that? He's firing! It's the machine-gun! Oh, Lord; and here we are as helpless as a lot of old ladies ten thousand miles away! We can't do a thing. We don't know what's happening. Why didn't he let one of us go with him?"

Yes, it was the machine-gun. We could hear it distinctly for at least a minute. Then came silence. That was two weeks ago. We have had no sign or signal from Tom Billings since.

CHAPTER II

I'LL never forget my first impressions of Caspak as I circled in, high over the surrounding cliffs. From the plane I looked down through a mist upon the blurred landscape beneath me. The hot, humid atmosphere of Caspak condenses as it is fanned by the cold Antarctic air-currents which sweep across the crater's top, sending a tenuous ribbon of vapor far out across the Pacific. Through this the picture gave one the suggestion of a colossal impressionistic canvas in greens and browns and scarlets and yellows surrounding the deep blue of the inland sea—just blobs of color taking form through the tumbling mist.

I dived close to the cliffs and skirted them for several miles without finding the least indication of a suitable landing-place; and then I swung back at a lower level, looking for a clearing close to the bottom of the mighty escarpment; but I could find none of sufficient area to insure safety. I was flying pretty low by this time, not only looking for landing places but watching the myriad life beneath me. I was down pretty well toward the south end of the island, where an arm of the lake reaches far inland, and I could see the surface of the water literally black with creatures of some sort. I was too far up to recognize individuals, but the general impression was of a vast army of amphibious monsters. The land was almost equally alive with crawling, leaping, running, flying things. It was one of the latter which nearly did for me while my attention was fixed upon the weird scene below.

The first intimation I had of it was the sudden blotting out of the sunlight from above, and as I glanced quickly up, I saw a most terrific creature swooping down upon me. It must have been fully eighty feet long from the end of its long, hideous beak to the tip of its thick, short tail, with an equal spread of wings. It was coming straight for me and hissing frightfully—I could hear it above the whir of the propeller. It was coming straight down toward the muzzle of the machine-gun and I let it have it right in the breast; but still it came for me, so that I had to dive and turn, though I was dangerously close to earth.

The thing didn't miss me by a dozen feet, and when I rose, it wheeled and followed me, but only to the cooler air close to the level of the cliff-tops; there it turned again and dropped. Something—man's natural love of battle and the chase, I presume—impelled me to pursue it, and so I too circled and dived. The moment I came down into the warm atmosphere of Caspak, the creature came for me again, rising above me so that it might swoop down upon me. Nothing could better have suited my armament, since my machine-gun was pointed upward at an angle of about 45° and could not be either depressed or elevated by the pilot. If I had brought some one along with me, we could have raked the great reptile from almost any position, but as the creature's mode of attack was always from above, he always found me ready with a hail of bullets. The battle must have lasted a minute or more before the thing suddenly turned completely over in the air and fell to the ground.

Bowen and I roomed together at college, and I learned a lot from him outside my regular course. He was a pretty good scholar despite his love of fun, and his particular hobby was paleontology. He used to tell me about the various forms of animal and vegetable life which had covered the globe during former eras, and so I was pretty well acquainted with the fishes, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals of paleolithic times. I knew that the thing that had attacked me was some sort of pterodactyl which should have been extinct millions of years ago. It was all that I needed to realize that Bowen had exaggerated nothing in his manuscript.

The Pterodactyl Disaster

HAVING disposed of my first foe, I set myself once more to search for a landing-place near to the base of the cliffs beyond which my party awaited me. I knew how anxious they would be for word from me, and I was equally anxious to relieve their minds and also to get them and our supplies well within Caspak, so that we might set off about our business of finding and rescuing Bowen Tyler; but the pterodactyl's carcass had scarcely fallen before I was surrounded by at least a dozen of the hideous things, some large, some small, but all bent upon my destruction. I could not cope with them all, and so I rose rapidly from among them to the cooler strata wherein they dared not follow; and then I recalled that Bowen's narrative distinctly indicated that the farther north one traveled in Caspak, the fewer were the terrible reptiles which rendered human life impossible at the southern end of the island.

There seemed nothing now but to search out a more northerly landing-place and then return to the *Toreador* and transport my companions, two by two, over the cliffs and deposit them at the rendezvous. As I flew north, the temptation to explore overcame me. I knew that I could easily cover Caspak and return to the beach with less petrol than I had in my tanks; and there was the hope, too, that I might find Bowen or some of his party. The broad expanse of the inland sea lured me out over its waters and as I crossed, I saw at either extremity of the great body of water an island—one to the south and one to the north; but I did not alter my course to examine either closely, leaving that to a later time.

The further shore of the sea revealed a much narrower strip of land between the cliffs and the water than upon the western side; but it was a hillier and more open country. There were splendid landing-places, and in the distance, toward the north, I thought I descried a village; but of that I was not positive. However, as I approached the land, I saw a number of human figures apparently pursuing one who fled across a broad expanse of meadow. As I dropped lower to have a better look at these people, they caught the whirring of my propellers and looked aloft. They paused an instant—pursuers and pursued; and then they broke and raced for the shelter of the nearest wood. Almost instantaneously a huge bulk swooped down upon me, and as I looked up, I realized that there were flying reptiles even in this part of Caspak. The creature dived for my right wing so quickly that nothing but a sheer drop could have saved me. I was already close to the ground, so that my maneuver was extremely dangerous; but I was in a fair way of making it successfully when I saw that I was too closely approaching a large tree. My effort to dodge the tree and the pterodactyl at the same time resulted disastrously. One wing touched an upper branch; the plane tipped and swung around, and then, out of control, dashed into the branches of the tree, where it came to rest, battered and torn, forty feet above the ground.

Hissing loudly, the huge reptile swept close above the tree in which my plane had lodged, circled twice over me and then flapped away toward the south. As I guessed then and was to learn later, forests are the surest sanctuary from these hideous creatures, which, with their enormous spread of wing and their great weight, are as much out of place among trees as is a seaplane.

For a minute or so I clung there to my battered flyer, now useless beyond redemption, my brain numbed by the frightful catastrophe that had befallen me. All my plans for the succor of Bowen and Miss La Rue had depended upon this craft, and in a few brief minutes my own selfish love of adventure had wrecked their hopes and mine. And what effect it might have upon the future of the balance of the rescuing expedition I could not even guess. Their lives, too, might be sacrificed to my suicidal foolishness. That I was doomed seemed inevitable; but I can honestly say that the fate of my friends concerned me more greatly than did my own.

Beyond the barrier cliffs my party was even now nervously awaiting my return. Presently apprehension and fear would claim them—and they would never know! They would attempt to scale the cliffs—of that I was sure; but I was not so positive that they would succeed; and after a while they would turn back, what there were left of them, and go sadly and mournfully upon their return-journey home. Home! I set my jaws and tried to forget the word, for I knew that I should never again see home.

On Foot in Caspak

AND what of Bowen and his girl? I had doomed them too. They would never even know that an attempt had been made to rescue them. If they still lived, they might some day come upon the ruined remnants of this great plane hanging in its lofty sepulcher and hazard vain guesses and be filled with wonder; but they would never know; and I could not but be glad that they would not know that Tom Billings had sealed their death-warrants by his criminal selfishness.

All these useless regrets were getting me in a bad way; but at last I shook myself and tried to put such things out of my mind and take hold of conditions as they existed and do my level best to wrest victory from defeat. I was badly shaken up and bruised, but considered myself mighty lucky to escape with my life. The plane hung at a precarious angle, so that it was with difficulty and considerable danger that I climbed from it into the tree and then to the ground.

My predicament was grave. Between me and my friends lay an inland sea fully sixty miles wide at this point, and an estimated land-distance of some three hundred miles around the northern end of the sea, through such hideous dangers as I am perfectly free to admit had me pretty well buffaloed. I had seen quite enough of Caspak this day to assure me that Bowen had in no way exaggerated its perils. As a matter of fact, I am inclined to believe that he had become so accustomed to them before he started upon his manuscript that he rather slighted them. As I stood there beneath that tree—a tree which should have been part of a coal-bed countless ages since—and looked out across a sea teeming with frightful life—life which should have been fossil before God conceived of Adam—I would not have given a minim of stale beer for my chances of ever seeing my friends or the outside world again; yet then and there I swore to fight my way as far through this hideous land as circumstances would permit. I had plenty of ammunition, an automatic pistol and a heavy rifle—the latter one of twenty added to our equipment on the strength of Bowen's description of the huge beasts of prey which ravaged Caspak. My greatest danger lay in the hideous reptilia whose low nervous organizations permitted their carnivorous instincts to function for several minutes after they had ceased to live.

But to these things I gave less thought than to the sudden frustration of all our plans. With the bitterest of thoughts I condemned myself for the foolish weakness that had permitted me to be drawn from the main object of my flight into premature and useless exploration. It seemed to me then that I must be totally eliminated from further search for Bowen, since, as I estimated it, the three hundred miles of Caspakian territory I must traverse to reach the base of the cliffs beyond which my party awaited me were practically impassable for a single individual unaccustomed to Caspakian life and ignorant of all that lay before him. Yet I could not give up hope entirely. My duty lay clear before me; I must follow it while life remained to me, and so I set forth toward the north.

The country through which I took my way was as lovely as it was unusual—I had almost said unearthly, for the plants, the trees, the blooms were not of the earth that I knew. They were larger, the colors more brilliant and the shapes startling, some almost to grotesqueness, though even such added to the charm and romance of the landscape as the giant cacti render weirdly beautiful the waste spots of the sad Mohave. And the sun shone huge and round and red over all, a monster sun above a monstrous world, its light dispersed by the humid air of Caspak—the warm, moist air which lies sluggish upon the breast of this great mother of life, Nature's mightiest incubator.

All about me, in every direction, was life. It moved through the tree-tops and among the boles; it displayed itself in widening and intermingling circles upon the bosom of the sea; it leaped above the surface; it rose majestic and terrible from the depths; I could hear it in a dense wood at my right, the murmur of it rising and falling in ceaseless volumes of sound, riven at intervals by a horrid scream or a thunderous roar which shook the earth; and always I was haunted by that inexplicable sensation that unseen eyes were watching me, that soundless feet dogged my trail. I am neither nervous nor high-strung; but the burden of responsibility upon me weighed heavily, so that I was more cautious than is my wont. I turned often to right and left and rear lest I be surprised, and I carried my rifle at the ready in my hand. Once I could have sworn that among the many creatures dimly perceived amidst the shadows of the wood I saw a human figure dart from one cover to another, but I could not be sure.

A Fair Native and the Panther

FOR the most part I skirted the wood, making occasional detours rather than enter those forbidding depths of gloom, though many times I was forced to pass through arms of the forest which extended to the very shore of the inland sea. There was so sinister a suggestion in the uncouth sounds and the vague glimpses of moving things within the forest, of the menace of strange beasts and possibly still stranger men, that I always breathed more freely when I had passed once more into open country.

I had traveled northward for perhaps an hour, still haunted by the conviction that I was being stalked by some creature which kept always just hidden among the trees and shrubbery to my right and a little to my rear, when for the hundredth time I was attracted by a sound from that direction, and turning, saw some animal running rapidly through the forest toward me. There was no longer any effort on its part at concealment; it came on through the underbrush swiftly, and I was confident that whatever it was, it had finally gathered the courage to charge me boldly. Before it finally broke into plain view, I became aware that it was not alone, for a few yards in its rear a second thing thrashed through the leafy jungle. Evidently I was to be attacked in force by a pair of hunting beasts or men.

And then through the last clump of waving ferns broke the figure of the foremost creature, which came leaping toward me on light feet as I stood with my rifle to my shoulder covering the point at which I had expected it would emerge. I must have looked foolish indeed if my surprise and consternation were in any way reflected upon my countenance as I lowered my rifle and gazed incredulous at the lithe figure of the girl speeding swiftly in my direction. But I did not have long to stand thus with lowered weapon, for as she came, I saw her cast an affrighted glance over her shoulder, and at the same moment there broke from the jungle at the same spot at which I had seen her, the hugest cat I had ever looked upon.

At first I took the beast for a saber-tooth tiger, as it was quite the most fearsome-appearing beast one could imagine; but it was not that dread monster of the past, though quite formidable enough to satisfy the most fastidious thrill-hunter. On it came, grim and terrible, its baleful eyes glaring above its distended jaws, its lips curled in a frightful snarl which exposed a whole mouthful of formidable teeth. At sight of me it had abandoned its impetuous rush and was now sneaking slowly toward us; while the girl, a long knife in her hand, took her stand bravely at my left and a little to my rear. She had called something to me in a strange tongue as she raced toward me, and now she spoke again; but what she said I could not then, of course, know—only that her tones were sweet, well modulated and free from any suggestion of panic.

Facing the huge cat, which I now saw was an enormous panther, I waited until I could place a shot where I felt it would do the most good, for at best a frontal shot at any of the large carnivora is a ticklish matter. I had some advantage in that the beast was not charging; its head was held low and its back exposed; and so at forty yards I took careful aim at its spine at the junction of neck and shoulders. But at the same instant, as though sensing my intention, the great creature lifted its head and leaped forward in full charge. To fire at that sloping forehead I knew would be worse than useless, and so I quickly shifted my aim and pulled the trigger, hoping against hope that the soft-nosed bullet and the heavy charge of powder would have sufficient stopping effect to give me time to place a second shot.

In answer to the report of the rifle I had the satisfaction of seeing the brute spring into the air, turning a complete somersault; but it was up again almost instantly, though in the brief second that it took it to scramble to its feet and get its bearings, it exposed its left side fully toward me, and a second bullet went crashing through its heart. Down it went for the second time—and then up and at me. The vitality of these creatures of Caspak is one of the marvelous features of this strange world and bespeaks the low nervous organization of the old paleolithic life which has been so long extinct in other portions of the world.

I put a third bullet into the beast at three paces, and then I thought that I was done for; but it rolled over and stopped at my feet, stone dead. I found that my second bullet had torn its heart almost completely away, and yet it had lived to charge ferociously upon me, and but for my third shot would doubtless have slain me before it finally expired—or as Bowen Tyler so quaintly puts it, before it knew that it was dead.

The Alus

WITH the panther quite evidently conscious of the fact that dissolution had overtaken it, I turned toward the girl, who was regarding me with evident admiration and not a little awe, though I must admit that my rifle claimed quite as much of her attention as did I. She was quite the most wonderful animal that I have ever looked upon, and what few of her charms her apparel hid, it quite effectively succeeded in accentuating. A bit of soft, undressed leather was caught over her left shoulder and beneath her right breast, falling upon her left side to her hip and upon the right to a metal band which encircled her leg above the knee and to which the lowest point of the hide was attached. About her waist was a loose leather belt, to the center of which was attached the scabbard belonging to her knife. There was a single armlet between her right shoulder and elbow, and a series of them covered her left forearm from elbow to wrist. These, I learned later, answer the purpose of a shield against knife attack when the left arm is raised in guard across the breast or face.

Her masses of heavy hair were held in place by a broad metal band which bore a large triangular ornament directly in the center of her forehead. This ornament appeared to be a huge turquoise, while the metal of all her ornaments was beaten, virgin gold, inlaid in intricate design with bits of mother-of-pearl and tiny pieces of stone of various colors. From the left shoulder depended a leopard's tail, while her feet were shod with sturdy little sandals. The knife was her only weapon. Its blade was of iron, the grip was wound with hide and protected by a guard of three out-bowing strips of flat iron, and upon the top of the hilt was a knob of gold.

I took in much of this in the few seconds during which we stood facing each other, and I also observed another salient feature of her appearance: she was frightfully dirty! Her face and limbs and garment were streaked with mud and perspiration, and yet even so, I felt that I had never looked upon so perfect and beautiful a creature as she. Her figure beggars description, and equally so, her face. Were I one of these writer-fellows, I should probably say that her features were Grecian, but being neither a writer nor a poet I can do her greater justice by saying that she combined all of the finest lines that one sees in the typical American girl's face rather than the pronounced sheep-like physiognomy of the Greek goddess. No, even the dirt couldn't hide that fact; she was beautiful beyond compare.

As we stood looking at each other, a slow smile came to her face, parting her symmetrical lips and disclosing a row of strong white teeth.

"Galu?" she asked with rising inflection.

And remembering that I read in Bowen's manuscript that Galu seemed to indicate a higher type of man, I answered by pointing to myself and repeating the word. Then she started off on a regular catechism, if I could judge by her inflection, for I certainly understood no word of what she said. All the time the girl kept glancing toward the forest, and at last she touched my arm and pointed in that direction.

Turning, I saw a hairy figure of a manlike thing standing watching us, and presently another and another emerged from the jungle and joined the leader until there must have been at least twenty of them. They were entirely naked. Their bodies were covered with hair, and though they stood upon their feet without touching their hands to the ground, they had a very apelike appearance, since they stooped forward and had very long arms and quite apish features. They were not pretty to look upon with their close-set eyes, flat noses, long upper lips and protruding yellow fangs.

"Alus!" said the girl.

I had reread Bowen's adventures so often that I knew them almost by heart, and so I now knew that I was looking upon the last remnant of that ancient man-race—the Alus of a forgotten period—the speechless man of antiquity.

"Kazor!" cried the girl, and at the same moment the Alus came jabbering toward us. They made strange growling, barking noises, as with much baring of fangs they advanced upon us. They were armed only with nature's weapons—powerful muscles and giant fangs; yet I knew that these were quite sufficient to overcome us had we nothing better to offer in defense, and so I drew my pistol and fired at the leader. He dropped like a stone, and the others turned and fled. Once again the girl smiled her slow smile and stepping closer, caressed the barrel of my automatic. As she did so, her fingers came in contact with mine, and a sudden thrill ran through me, which I attributed to the fact that it had been so long since I had seen a woman of any sort or kind.

Not a Lady's Man A Dirty Goddess

SHE said something to me in her low, liquid tones; but I could not understand her, and then she pointed toward the north and started away. I followed her, for my way was north too; but had it been south I still should have followed, so hungry was I for human companionship in this world of beasts and reptiles and half-men.

We walked along, the girl talking a great deal and seeming mystified that I could not understand her. Her silvery laugh rang merrily when I in turn essayed to speak to her, as though my language was the quaintest thing she ever had heard. Often after fruitless attempts to make me understand, she would hold her palm toward me, saying, *"Galu!"* and then touch my breast or arm and cry, *"Alu, alu!"* I knew what she meant for I had learned from Bowen's narrative the negative gesture and the two words which she repeated. She meant that I was no Galu, as I claimed, but an Alu, or speechless one. Yet every time she said this she laughed again, and so infectious were her tones that I could only join her. It was only natural, too, that she should be mystified by my inability to comprehend her or to make her comprehend me, for from the club-men, the lowest human type in Caspak to have speech, to the golden race of Galus, the tongues of the various tribes are identical except for amplifications in the rising scale of evolution. She, who is a Galu, can understand one of the Bo-lu and make herself understood to him, or to a hatchet-man, a spear-man or an archer. The Ho-lus, or apes, the Alus and myself were the only creatures of human semblance with which she could hold no converse; yet it was evident that her intelligence told her that I was neither Ho-lu nor Alu, neither anthropoid ape nor speechless man.

Yet she did not despair, but set out to teach me her language; and had it not been that I worried so greatly over the fate of Bowen and my companions of the *Toreador,* I could have wished the period of instruction prolonged.

I never have been what one might call a ladies' man, though I like their company immensely, and during my college days and since have made various friends among the sex. I think that I rather appeal to a certain type of girl for the reason that I never make love to them; I leave that to the numerous others who do it infinitely better than I could hope to, and take my pleasure out of girls' society in what seem to be more rational ways—dancing, golfing, boating, riding, tennis, and the like. Yet in the company of this half-naked little savage I found a new pleasure that was entirely distinct from any that I ever had experienced. When she touched me, I thrilled as I had never before thrilled in contact with another woman. I could not quite understand it, for I am sufficiently sophisticated to know that this is a symptom of love and I certainly did not love this filthy little barbarian with her broken, unkempt nails and her skin so besmeared with mud and the green of crushed foliage that it was difficult to say what color it originally had been. But if she was outwardly uncouth, her clear eyes and strong, white, even teeth, her silvery laugh and her queenly carriage, bespoke an innate fineness which dirt could not quite successfully conceal.

The sun was low in the heavens when we came upon a little river which emptied into a large bay at the foot of low cliffs. Our journey so far had been beset with constant danger, as is every journey in this frightful land. I have not bored you with a recital of the wearying successions of attacks by the multitude of creatures which were constantly crossing our path or deliberately stalking us. We were always upon the alert; for here, to paraphrase, eternal vigilance is indeed the price of life.

I had managed to progress a little in the acquisition of a knowledge of her tongue, so that I knew many of the animals and reptiles by their Caspakian names, and trees and ferns and grasses. I knew the words for *sea* and *river,* and *cliff,* for *sky* and *sun* and *cloud.* Yes, I was getting along finely, and then it occurred to me that I didn't know my companion's name; so I pointed to myself and said, "Tom." Then I pointed to her and raised my eyebrows in interrogation. The girl ran her fingers into that mass of hair and looked puzzled. I repeated the action a dozen times.

"Tom," she said finally in that clear, sweet, liquid voice. "Tom!"

I had never thought much of my name before;

but when she spoke it, it sounded to me for the first time in my life like a mighty nice name, and then she brightened suddenly and tapped her own breast and said: "Ajor!"

"Ajor!" I repeated, and she laughed and struck her palms together.

Well, we knew each other's names now, and that was some satisfaction. I rather liked hers—Ajor! And she seemed to like mine, for she repeated it.

A Bath in Caspak

SO we came to the cliffs beside the little river where it empties into the bay with the great inland sea beyond. The cliffs were weather-worn and rotted, and in one place a deep hollow ran back beneath the overhanging stone for several feet, suggesting shelter for the night. There were loose rocks strewn all about with which I might build a barricade across the entrance to the cave, and so I halted there and pointed out the place to Ajor, trying to make her understand that we would spend the night here.

As soon as she grasped my meaning, she assented with the Caspakian equivalent of an affirmative nod, and then touching my rifle, motioned to me to follow her to the river. At the bank she paused, removed her belt and dagger, dropping them to the ground at her side; then unfastening the lower edge of her garment from the metal leg-band to which it was attached, slipped it off her left shoulder and let it drop to the ground around her feet. It was done so naturally, so simply and so quickly that it left me gasping like a fish out of water. Turning, she flashed a smile at me and then dived into the river, and there she bathed while I stood guard over her. For five or ten minutes she splashed about, and when she emerged her glistening skin was smooth and white and beautiful. Without means of drying herself, she simply ignored what to me would have seemed a necessity, and in a moment was arrayed in her simple though effective costume.

It was now within an hour of darkness, and as I was nearly famished, I led the way back about a quarter of a mile to a low meadow where we had seen antelope and small horses a short time before. Here I brought down a young buck, the report of my rifle sending the balance of the herd scampering for the woods, where they were met by a chorus of hideous roars as the carnivora took advantage of their panic and leaped among them.

With my hunting-knife I removed a hind-quarter, and then we returned to camp. Here I gathered a great quantity of wood from fallen trees, Ajor helping me; but before I built a fire, I also gathered sufficient loose rock to build my barricade against the frightful terrors of the night to come.

I shall never forget the expression upon Ajor's face as she saw me strike a match and light the kindling beneath our camp-fire. It was such an expression as might transform a mortal face with awe as its owner beheld the mysterious workings of divinity. It was evident that Ajor was quite unfamiliar with modern methods of fire-making. She had thought my rifle and pistol wonderful; but these tiny slivers of wood which from a magic rub brought flame to the camp hearth were indeed miracles to her.

As the meat roasted above the fire, Ajor and I tried once again to talk; but though copiously filled with incentive, gestures and sounds, the conversation did not flourish notably. And then Ajor took up in earnest the task of teaching me her language. She commenced, as I later learned, with the simplest form of speech known to Caspak or for that matter to the world—that employed by the Bo-lu. I found it far from difficult, and even though it was a great handicap upon my instructor that she could not speak my language, she did remarkably well and demonstrated that she possessed ingenuity and intelligence of a high order.

After we had eaten, I added to the pile of firewood so that I could replenish the fire before the entrance to our barricade, believing this as good a protection against the carnivora as we could have; and then Ajor and I sat down before it, and the lesson proceeded, while from all about us came the weird and awesome noises of the Caspakian night—the moaning and the coughing and roaring of the tigers, the panthers and the lions, the barking and the dismal howling of wolf, jackal and hyaenadon, the shrill shrieks of stricken prey and the hissing of the great reptiles; the voice of man alone was silent.

But though the voice of this choir-terrible rose and fell from far and near in all directions, reaching at times such a tremendous volume of sound that the earth shook to it, yet so engrossed was I in my lesson and in my teacher that often I was deaf to what at another time would have filled me with awe. The face and voice of the beautiful girl who leaned so eagerly toward me as she tried to explain the meaning of some word or correct my pronunciation of another quite entirely occupied my every faculty of perception. The firelight shone upon her animated features and sparkling eyes; it accentuated the graceful motions of her gesturing arms and hands; it sparkled from her white teeth and from her golden ornaments, and glistened on the smooth firmness of her perfect skin. I am afraid that often I was more occupied with admiration of this beautiful animal than with a desire for knowledge; but be that as it may, I nevertheless learned much that evening, though part of what I learned had naught to do with any new language.

Ajor seemed determined that I should speak Caspakian as quickly as possible, and I thought I saw in her desire a little of that all-feminine trait which has come down through all the ages from the first lady of the world—curiosity. Ajor desired that I should speak her tongue in order that she might satisfy a curiosity concerning me that was filling her to a point where she was in danger of bursting; of that I was positive. She was a regular little animated question-mark. She bubbled over with interrogations which were never to be satisfied unless I learned to speak her tongue. Her eyes sparkled with excitement; her hand flew in expressive gestures; her little tongue raced with time; yet all to no avail. I could say *man* and *tree* and *cliff* and *lion* and a number of other words in perfect Caspakian; but such a vocabulary was only tantalizing; it did not lend itself well to a very general conversation, and the result was that Ajor would wax so wroth that she would clench her little fists and beat me on the breast as hard as ever she could, and then she would sink back laughing as the humor of the situation captured her.

She was trying to teach me some verbs by going through the actions herself as she repeated the proper word. We were very much engrossed—so much so that we were giving no heed to what went on beyond our cave—when Ajor stopped very suddenly, crying: *"Kazor!"* Now she had been trying to teach me that *ju* meant *stop;* so when she cried *Kazor* and at the same time stopped, I thought for a moment that this was part of my lesson—for the moment I forgot that *kazor* means *beware.* I therefore repeated the word after her; but when I saw the expression in her eyes as they were directed past me and saw her point toward the entrance to the cave, I turned quickly—to see a hideous face at the small aperture leading out into the night. It was the fierce and snarling countenance of a gigantic bear. I have hunted silver-tips in the White Mountains of Arizona and thought them quite the largest and most formidable of big game; but from the appearance of the head of this awful creature I judged that the largest grizzly I had ever seen would shrink by comparison to the dimensions of a Newfoundland dog.

The Bear of Caspak

OUR fire was just within the cave, the smoke rising through the apertures between the rocks that I had piled in such a way that they arched inward toward the cliff at the top. The opening by means of which we were to reach the outside was barricaded with a few large fragments which did not by any means close it entirely; but through the apertures thus left no large animal could gain ingress. I had depended most, however, upon our fire, feeling that none of the dangerous nocturnal beasts of prey would venture close to the flames. In this, however, I was quite evidently in error, for the great bear stood with his nose not a foot from the blaze, which was now low, owing to the fact that I had been so occupied with my lesson and my teacher that I had neglected to replenish it.

Ajor whipped out her futile little knife and pointed to my rifle. At the same time she spoke in a quite level voice entirely devoid of nervousness or any evidence of fear or panic. I knew she was exhorting me to fire upon the beast; but this I did not wish to do other than as a last resort, for I was quite sure that even my heavy bullets would not more than further enrage him—in which case he might easily force an entrance to our cave.

Instead of firing, I piled some more wood upon the fire, and as the smoke and blaze arose in the beast's face, it backed away, growling most frightfully; but I still could see two ugly points of light blazing in the outer darkness and hear its growls rumbling terrifically without. For some time the creature stood there watching the entrance to our frail sanctuary while I racked my brains in futile endeavor to plan some method of defense or escape. I knew full well that should the bear make a determined effort to get at us, the rocks I had piled as a barrier would come tumbling down about his giant shoulders like a house of cards, and that he would walk directly in upon us.

Ajor, having less knowledge of the effectiveness of firearms than I, and therefore greater confidence in them, entreated me to shoot the beast; but I knew that the chance that I could stop it with a single shot was most remote, while that I should but infuriate it was real and present; and so I waited for what seemed an eternity, watching those devilish points of fire glaring balefully at us, and listening to the ever-increasing volume of those seismic growls which seemed to rumble upward from the bowels of the earth, shaking the very cliffs beneath which we cowered, until at last I saw that the brute was again approaching the aperture. It availed me nothing that I piled the blaze high with firewood, until Ajor and I were near to roasting; on came that mighty engine of destruction until once again the hideous face yawned its fanged yawn directly within the barrier's opening. It stood thus a moment, and then the head was withdrawn. I breathed a sigh of relief, the thing had altered its intention and was going on in search of other and more easily procurable prey; the fire had been too much for it.

But my joy was short-lived, and my heart sank once again as a moment later I saw a mighty paw insinuated into the opening—a paw as large around as a large dish-pan. Very gently the paw toyed with the great rock that partly closed the entrance, pushed and pulled upon it and then very deliberately drew it outward and to one side. Again came the head, and this time much farther into the cavern; but still the great shoulders would not pass through the opening. Ajor moved closer to me until her shoulder touched my side, and I thought I felt a slight tremor run through her body, but otherwise she gave no indication of fear. Involuntarily I threw my left arm about her and drew her to me for an instant. It was an act of reassurance rather than a caress, though I must admit that again and even in the face of death I thrilled at the contact with her; and then I released her and threw my rifle to my shoulder, for at last I had reached the conclusion that nothing more could be gained by waiting. My only hope was to get as many shots into the creature as I could before it was upon me. Already it had torn away a second rock and was in the very act of forcing its huge bulk through the opening it had now made.

So now I took careful aim between its eyes; my right fingers closed firmly and evenly upon the small of the stock, drawing back my trigger-finger by the muscular action of the hand. The bullet could not fail to hit its mark! I held my breath lest I swerve the muzzle a hair by my breathing. I was as steady and cool as I ever had been upon a target-range, and I had the full consciousness of a perfect hit in anticipation; I knew that I could not miss. And then, as the bear surged forward toward me, the hammer fell—futilely, upon an imperfect cartridge.

Almost simultaneously I heard from without a perfectly hellish roar; the bear gave voice to a series of growls far transcending in volume and ferocity anything that he had yet essayed and at the same time backed quickly from the cave. For an instant I couldn't understand what had happened to cause this sudden retreat when his prey was practically within his clutches. The idea that the harmless clicking of the hammer had frightened him was too ridiculous to entertain. However, we had not long to wait before we could at least guess at the cause of the diversion, for from without came mingled growls and roars and the sound of great bodies thrashing about until the earth shook. The bear had been attacked in the rear by some other mighty beast, and the two were now locked in a titanic struggle for supremacy. With brief respites, during which we could hear the labored breathing of the contestants, the battle continued for the better part of an hour until the sounds of combat grew gradually less and finally ceased entirely.

At Ajor's suggestion, made by signs and a few of the words we knew in common, I moved the fire directly to the entrance to the cave so that a beast would have to pass directly through the flames to reach us, and then we sat and waited for the victor of the battle to come and claim his reward; but though we sat for a long time with our eyes glued to the opening, we saw no sign of any beast.

At last I signed to Ajor to lie down, for I knew that she must have sleep, and I sat on guard until nearly morning, when the girl awoke and insisted that I take some rest; nor would she be denied, but dragged me down as she laughingly menaced me with her knife.

CHAPTER III

WHEN I awoke, it was daylight, and I found Ajor squatting before a fine bed of coals roasting a large piece of antelope-meat. Believe me, the sight of the new day and the delicious odor of the cooking meat filled me with renewed happiness and hope that had been all but expunged by the experience of the previous night; and perhaps the slender figure of the bright-faced girl proved also a potent restorative. She looked up and smiled at me, showing those perfect teeth, and dimpling with evident happiness—the most adorable picture that I had ever seen. I recall that it was then I first regretted that she was only a little untutored savage and so far beneath me in the scale of evolution.

Her first act was to beckon me to follow her outside, and there she pointed to the explanation of our rescue from the bear—a huge saber-tooth tiger, its fine coat and its flesh torn to ribbons, lying dead a few paces from our cave, and beside it, equally mangled, and disemboweled, was the carcass of a huge cave-bear. To have had one's life saved by a saber-tooth tiger, and in the twentieth century into the bargain, was an experience that was to say the least unique; but it had happened—I had the proof of it before my eyes.

So enormous are the great carnivora of Caspak that they must feed perpetually to support their giant thews, and the result is that they will eat the meat of any other creature and will attack anything that comes within their ken, no matter how formidable the quarry. From later observation—I mention this as worthy the attention of paleontologists and naturalists—I came to the conclusion that such creatures as the cave-bear, the cave-lion and the saber-tooth tiger, as well as the larger carnivorous reptiles make, ordinarily, two kills a day—one in the morning and one after nightfall. They immediately devour the entire carcass, after which they lie up and sleep for a few hours. Fortunately their numbers are comparatively few; otherwise there would be no other life within Caspak. It is their very voracity that keeps their numbers down to a point which permits other forms of life to persist, for even in the season of love the great males often turn upon their own mates and devour them, while both males and females occasionally devour their young. How the human and semi-human races have managed to survive during all the countless ages that these conditions must have existed here is quite beyond me.

After breakfast Ajor and I set out once more upon our northward journey. We had gone but a little distance when we were attacked by a number of apelike creatures armed with clubs. They seemed a little higher in the scale than the Alus. Ajor told me they were Bo-lu, or club-men. A revolver-shot killed one and scattered the others; but several times later during the day we were menaced by them, until we had left their country and entered that of the Sto-lu, or hatchet-men. These people were less hairy and more manlike; nor did they appear so anxious to destroy us. Rather they were curious, and followed us for some distance examining us most closely. They called out to us, and Ajor answered them; but her replies did not seem to satisfy them, for they gradually became threatening, and I think they were preparing to attack us when a small deer that had been hiding in some low brush suddenly broke cover and dashed across our front. We needed meat, for it was near one o'clock and I was getting hungry; so I drew my pistol and with a single shot dropped the creature in its tracks. The effect upon the Sto-lu was electrical. Immediately they abandoned all thoughts of war, and turning, scampered for the forest which fringed our path.

That night we spent beside a little stream in the Sto-lu country. We found a tiny cave in the rock bank, so hidden away that only chance could direct a beast of prey to it, and after we had eaten of the deer-meat and some fruit which Ajor gathered, we crawled into the little hole, and with sticks and stones which I had gathered for the purpose, I erected a strong barricade inside the entrance. Nothing could reach us without swimming and wading through the stream, and I felt quite secure from attack. Our quarters were rather cramped. The ceiling was so low that we could not stand up, and the floor so narrow that it was with difficulty that we both wedged into it together; but we were very tired, and so we made the most of it; and so great was the feeling of security that I am sure I fell asleep as soon as I had stretched myself beside Ajor.

A Diplodocus

DURING the three days which followed, our progress was exasperatingly slow. I doubt if we made ten miles in the entire three days. The country was hideously savage, so that we were forced to spend hours at a time in hiding from one or another of the great beasts which menaced us continually. There were fewer reptiles; but the quantity of carnivora seemed to have increased, and the reptiles that we did see were perfectly gigantic. I shall never forget one enormous specimen which we came upon browsing upon water-reeds at the edge of the great sea. It stood well over twelve feet high at the rump, its highest point, and with its enormously long tail and neck it was somewhere between seventy-five and a hundred feet in length. Its head was ridiculously small; its body was unarmored, but its great bulk gave it a most formidable appearance. My experience of Caspakian life led me to believe that the gigantic creature would but have to see us to attack us, and so I raised my rifle and at the same time drew away toward some brush which offered concealment; but Ajor only laughed, and picking up a stick, ran toward the great thing, shouting. The little head was raised high upon the long neck as the animal stupidly looked here and there in search of the author of the disturbance. At last its eyes discovered tiny little Ajor, and then she hurled the stick at the diminutive head. With a cry that sounded not unlike the bleat of a sheep, the colossal creature shuffled into the water and was soon submerged.

As I slowly recalled my collegiate studies and paleontological readings in Bowen's text-books, I realized that I had looked upon nothing less than a diplodocus of the Upper Jurassic; but how infinitely different was the true, live thing from the crude restorations of Hatcher and Holland! I had had the idea that the diplodocus was a land-animal, but evidently it is partially amphibious. I have seen several since my first encounter, and in each case the creature took to the water for concealment as soon as it was disturbed. With the exception of its gigantic tail, it has no weapon of defense; but with this appendage it can lash so terrific a blow as to lay low even a giant cave-bear, stunned and broken. It is a stupid, simple, gentle beast—one of the few within Caspak which such a description might even remotely fit.

For three nights we slept in trees, finding no caves or other place of concealment. Here we were free from the attacks of the large land carnivora; but the smaller flying reptiles, the snakes, leopards, and panthers were a constant menace, though by no means as much to be feared as the huge beasts that roamed the surface of the earth.

At the close of the third day Ajor and I were able to converse with considerable fluency, and it was a great relief to both of us, especially to Ajor. She now did nothing but ask questions whenever I would let her, which could not be all the time, as our preservation depended largely upon the rapidity with which I could gain knowledge of the geography and customs of Caspak, and accordingly I had to ask numerous questions myself.

I enjoyed immensely hearing and answering her, so naïve were many of her queries and so filled with wonder was she at the things I told her of the world beyond the lofty barriers of Caspak; not once did she seem to doubt me, however marvelous my statements must have seemed; and doubtless they were the cause of marvel to Ajor, who before had never dreamed that any life existed beyond Caspak and the life she knew.

Artless though many of her questions were, they evidenced a keen intellect and a shrewdness which seemed far beyond her years or her experience. Altogether I was finding my little savage a mighty interesting and companionable person, and I often thanked the kind fate that directed the crossing of our paths. From her I learned much of Caspak, but there still remained the mystery that had proved so baffling to Bowen Tyler—the total absence of young among the ape, the semihuman and the human races with which both he and I had come in contact upon opposite shores of the inland sea. Ajor tried to explain the matter to me, though it was apparent that she could not conceive how so natural a condition should demand explanation. She told me that among the Galus there were a few babies, that she had once been a baby but that most of her people "came up," as she put it, "*cor sva jo*," or literally, "from the beginning"; and as they all did when they used that phrase, she would wave a broad gesture toward the south.

The Country of the Band-lu of Caspak

"FOR long," she explained, leaning very close to me and whispering the words into my ear the while she cast apprehensive glances about and mostly skyward, "for long my mother kept me hidden lest the Wieroo, passing through the air by night, should come and take me away to Oo-oh." And the child shuddered as she voiced the word. I tried to get her to tell me more; but her terror was so real when she spoke of the Wieroo and the land of Oo-oh where they dwell that I at last desisted, though I did learn that the Wieroo carried off only female babes and occasionally women of the Galus who had "come up from the beginning." It was all very mysterious and unfathomable, but I got the idea that the Wieroo were creatures of imagination—the demons or gods of her race, omniscient and omnipresent. This led me to assume that the Galus had a religious sense, and further questioning brought out the fact that such was the case. Ajor spoke in tones of reverence of Luata, the god of heat and life. The word is derived from two others: *Lua*, meaning *sun*, and *ata*, meaning variously *eggs*, *life*, *young* and *reproduction*. She told me that they worshiped Luata in several forms, as fire, the sun, eggs and other material objects which suggested heat and reproduction.

I had noticed that whenever I built a fire, Ajor outlined in the air before her with a forefinger an isosceles triangle, and that she did the same in the morning when she first viewed the sun. At first I had not connected her act with anything in particular; but after we learned to converse and she had explained a little of her religious superstitions, I realized that she was making the sign of the triangle as a Roman Catholic makes the sign of the cross. Always the short side of the triangle was uppermost. As she explained all this to me, she pointed to the decorations on her golden armlets, upon the knob of her dagger-hilt and upon the band which encircled her right leg above the knee—always was the design partly made up of isosceles triangles, and when she explained the significance of this particular geometric figure, I at once grasped its appropriateness.

We were now in the country of the Band-lu, the spearmen of Caspak. Bowen had remarked in his narrative that these people were analogous to the so-called Cro-Magnon race of the Upper Paleolithic, and I was therefore very anxious to see them. Nor was I to be disappointed; I saw them, all right! We had left the Sto-lu country and literally fought our way through cordons of wild beasts for two days when we decided to make camp a little earlier than usual, owing to the fact that we had reached a line of cliffs running east and west in which were numerous likely cave-lodgings. We were both very tired, and the sight of these caverns, several of which could be easily barricaded, decided us to halt until the following morning. It took but a few minutes' exploration to discover one particular cavern high up the face of the cliff which seemed ideal for our purpose. It opened upon a narrow ledge where we could build our cook-fire; the opening was so small that we had to lie flat and wriggle through it to gain ingress, while the interior was high-ceiled and spacious. I lighted a faggot and looked about; but as far as I could see, the chamber ran back into the cliff.

Laying aside my rifle, pistol and heavy ammunition-belt, I left Ajor in the cave while I went down to gather firewood. We already had meat and fruits which we had gathered just before reaching the cliffs, and my canteen was filled with fresh water. Therefore all we required was fuel, and as I always saved Ajor's strength when I could, I would not permit her to accompany me. The poor girl was very tired; but she would have gone with me until she dropped, I know, so loyal was she. She was the best comrade in the world, and sometimes I regretted and sometimes I was glad that she was not of my own caste, for had she been, I should unquestionably have fallen in love with her. As it was, we traveled together like two boys, with huge respect for each other but no softer sentiment.

There was little timber close to the base of the cliffs, and so I was forced to enter the wood some two hundred yards distant. I realize now how foolhardy was my act in such a land as Caspak, teeming with danger and with death; but there is a certain amount of fool in every man; and whatever proportion of it I own must have been in the ascendant that day, for the truth of the matter is that I went down into those woods absolutely defenseless; and I paid the price, as people usually do for their indiscretions. As I searched around in the brush for likely pieces of firewood, my head bowed and my eyes upon the ground, I suddenly felt a great weight hurl itself upon me. I struggled to my knees and seized my assailant, a huge, naked man—naked except for a breechcloth of snake-skin, the head hanging down to the knees. The fellow was armed with a stone-shod spear, a stone knife and a hatchet. In his black hair were several gay-colored feathers. As we struggled to and fro, I was slowly gaining advantage of him, when a score of his fellows came running up and overpowered me.

They bound my hands behind me with long rawhide thongs and then surveyed me critically. I found them fine-looking specimens of manhood, for the most part. There were some among them who bore a resemblance to the Sto-lu and were hairy; but the majority had massive heads and not unlovely features. There was little about them to suggest the ape, as in the Sto-lu, Bo-lu and Alus. I expected them to kill me at once, but they did not. Instead they questioned me; but it was evident that they did not believe my story, for they scoffed and laughed.

"The Galus have turned you out," they cried. "If you go back to them, you will die. If you remain here, you will die. We shall kill you; but first we shall have a dance and you shall dance with us—the dance of death."

It sounded quite reassuring! But I knew that I was not to be killed immediately, and so I took heart. They led me toward the cliffs, and as we approached them, I glanced up and was sure that I saw Ajor's bright eyes peering down upon us from our lofty cave; but she gave no sign if she saw me; and we passed on, rounded the end of the cliffs and proceeded along the opposite face of them until we came to a section literally honeycombed with caves. All about, upon the ground and swarming the ledges before the entrances, were hundreds of members of the tribe. There were many women but no babes or children, though I noticed that the females had better developed breasts than any that I had seen among the hatchet-men, the club-men, the Alus or the apes. In fact, among the lower orders of Caspakian man the female breast is but a rudimentary organ, barely suggested in the apes and Alus, and only a little more defined in the Bo-lu and Sto-lu, though always increasingly so until it is found about half developed in the females of the spear-men; yet never was there an indication that the females had suckled young; nor were there any young among them. Some of the Band-lu women were quite comely. The figures of all, both men and women, were symmetrical though heavy, and though there were some who verged strongly upon the Sto-lu type, there were others who were positively handsome and whose bodies were quite hairless. The Alus are all bearded, but among the Bo-lu the beard disappears in the women. The Sto-lu men show a sparse beard, the Band-lu none; and there is little hair upon the bodies of their women.

The members of the tribe showed great interest in me, especially in my clothing, the like of which, of course, they never had seen. They pulled and hauled upon me, and some of them struck me; but for the most part they were not inclined to brutality. It was only the hairier ones, who most closely resembled the Sto-lu, who maltreated me. At last my captors led me into a great cave in the mouth of which a fire was burning. The floor was littered with filth, including the bones of many animals, and the atmosphere reeked with the stench of human bodies and putrifying flesh. Here they fed me, releasing my arms, and I ate of half-cooked auroch steak and a stew which may have been made of snakes, for many of the long, round pieces of meat suggested them most nauseatingly.

The Great Labyrinthian Cavern

THE meal completed, they led me well within the cavern, which they lighted with torches stuck in various crevices, in the light of which I saw, to my astonishment, that the walls were covered with paintings and etchings. There were aurochs, red deer, saber-tooth tiger, cave-bear, hyaenadon and many other examples of the fauna of Caspak done in colors, usually of four shades of brown, or scratched upon the surface of the rock. Often they were superimposed upon each other until it required careful examination to trace out the various outlines. But they all showed a rather remarkable aptitude for delineation which further fortified Bowen's comparisons between these people and the extinct Cro-Magnons whose ancient art is still preserved in the caverns of Niaux and Le Portel. The Band-lu, however, did not have the bow and arrow, and in this respect they differ from their extinct progenitors, or descendants, of Western Europe.

Should any of my friends chance to read the story of my adventures upon Caprona, I hope they will not be bored by these diversions, and if they are, I can only say that I am writing my memoirs principally for my own edification and therefore setting down those things which interested me particularly at the time. I have no desire that the general public should ever have access to these pages; but it is possible that my friends may, and also certain savants who are interested; and to them, while I do not apologize for my philosophizing, I humbly explain that they are witnessing the gropings of a finite mind after the infinite, the search for explanations of the inexplicable.

In a far recess of the cavern my captors bade me halt. Again my hands were secured, and this time my feet as well. During the operation they questioned me, and I was mighty glad that the marked similarity between the various tribal tongues of Caspak enabled us to understand each other perfectly, even though they were unable to believe or even to comprehend the truth of my origin and the circumstances of my advent in Caspak; and finally they left me saying that they would come for me before the dance of death upon the morrow. Before they departed with their torches, I saw that I had not been conducted to the farthest extremity of the cavern, for a dark and gloomy corridor led beyond my prison room into the heart of the cliff.

I could not but marvel at the immensity of this great underground grotto. Already I had traversed several hundred yards of it, from many points of which other corridors diverged. The whole cliff must be honeycombed with apartments and passages of which this community occupied but a comparatively small part, so that the possibility of the more remote passages being the lair of savage beasts that had other means of ingress and egress than that used by the Band-lu filled me with dire forebodings.

I believe that I am not ordinarily hysterically apprehensive; yet I must confess that under the conditions with which I was confronted, I felt my nerves to be somewhat shaken. On the morrow I was to die some sort of nameless death for the diversion of a savage horde, but the morrow held fewer terrors for me than the present, and I submit to any fair-minded man if it is not a terrifying thing to lie bound hand and foot in the Stygian blackness of an immense cave peopled by unknown dangers in a land overrun by hideous beasts and reptiles of the greatest ferocity. At any moment, perhaps at this very moment, some silent-footed beast of prey might catch my scent where it laired in some contiguous passage, and might creep stealthily upon me. I craned my neck about, and stared through the inky darkness for the twin spots of blazing hate which I knew would herald the coming of my executioner. So real were the imaginings of my overwrought brain that I broke into a cold sweat in absolute conviction that some beast was close before me; yet the hours dragged, and no sound broke the gravelike stillness of the cavern.

This Goddess in the Cave

DURING that period of eternity many events of my life passed before my mental vision, a vast parade of friends and occurrences which would be blotted out forever on the morrow. I cursed myself for the foolish act which had taken me from the search-party that so depended upon me, and I wondered what progress, if any, they had made. Were they still beyond the barrier cliffs, awaiting my return? Or had they found a way into Caspak? I felt that the latter would be the truth, for the party was not made up of men easily turned from a purpose. Quite probable it was that they were already searching for me; but that they would ever find a trace of me I doubted. Long since had I come to the conclusion that it was beyond human prowess to circle the shores of the inland sea of Caspak in the face of the myriad menaces which lurked in every shadow by day and by night. Long since had I given up any hope of reaching the point where I had made my entry into the country, and so I was now equally convinced that our entire expedition had been worse than futile before ever it was conceived, since Bowen J. Tyler and his wife could not by any possibility have survived during all these long months; no more could Bradley and his party of seamen be yet in existence. If the superior force and equipment of my party enabled them to circle the north end of the sea, they might some day come upon the broken wreck of my plane hanging in the great tree to the south; but long before that, my bones would be added to the litter upon the floor of this mighty cavern.

And through all my thoughts, real and fanciful, moved the image of a perfect girl, clear-eyed and strong and straight and beautiful, with the carriage of a queen and the supple, undulating grace of a leopard. Though I loved my friends, their fate seemed of less importance to me than the fate of this little barbarian stranger for whom, I had convinced myself many a time, I felt no greater sentiment than passing friendship for a fellow-wayfarer in this land of horrors. Yet I so worried and fretted about her and her future that at last I quite forgot my own predicament, though I still struggled intermittently with my bonds in vain endeavor to free myself; as much, however, that I might hasten to her protection as that I might escape the fate which had been planned for me. And while I was thus engaged and had for the moment forgotten my apprehensions concerning prowling beasts, I was startled into tense silence by a distinct and unmistakable sound coming from the dark corridor farther toward the heart of the cliff—the sound of padded feet moving stealthily in my direction.

I believe that never before in all my life, even amidst the terrors of childhood nights, have I suffered such a sensation of extreme horror as I did that moment in which I realized that I must lie bound and helpless while some horrid beast of prey crept upon me to devour me in that utter darkness of the Band-lu pits of Caspak. I reeked with cold sweat, and my flesh crawled—I could feel it crawl. If ever I came nearer to abject cowardice, I do not recall the instance; and yet it was not that I was afraid to die, for I had long since given myself up as lost—a few days of Caspak must impress anyone with the utter nothingness of life. The waters, the land, the air teem with death, and one is always devoured by some other form of life. Life is the cheapest thing in Caspak, as it is the cheapest thing on earth and, doubtless, the cheapest cosmic production. No, I was not afraid to die; in fact, I prayed for death, that I might be relieved of the frightfulness of the interval of life which remained to me—the waiting, the awful waiting, for that fearsome beast to reach me and to strike.

Presently it was so close that I could hear its breathing, and then it touched me and leaped quickly back as though it had come upon me unexpectedly. For long moments no sound broke the sepulchral silence of the cave. Then I heard a movement on the part of the creature near me, and again it touched me, and I felt something like a hairless hand pass over my face and down until it touched the collar of my flannel shirt. And then, subdued, but filled with pent emotion, a voice cried: "Tom!"

I think I nearly fainted, so great was the reaction. "Ajor!" I managed to say. "Ajor, my girl, can it be you?"

"Oh, Tom!" she cried again in a trembly little voice and flung herself upon me, sobbing softly. I had not known that Ajor could cry.

As she cut away my bonds, she told me that from the entrance to our cave she had seen the Band-lu coming out of the forest with me, and she had followed until they took me into the cave, which she had seen was upon the opposite side of the cliff in which ours was located; and then, knowing that she could do nothing for me until after the Band-lu slept, she had hastened to return to our cave. With difficulty she had reached it, after having been stalked by a cave lion and almost seized. I trembled at the risk she had run.

It had been her intention to wait until after midnight, when most of the carnivora would have made their kills, and then attempt to reach the cave in which I was imprisoned and rescue me. She explained that with my rifle and pistol—both of which she assured me she could use, having watched me so many times—she planned upon frightening the Band-lu and forcing them to give me up. Brave little girl! She would have risked her life willingly to save me. But some time after she reached our cave she heard voices from the far recesses within, and immediately concluded that we had but found another entrance to the caves which the Band-lu occupied upon the other face of the cliff. Then she had set out through those winding passages and in total darkness had groped her way, guided solely by a marvelous sense of direction, to where I lay. She had had to proceed with utmost caution lest she fall into some abyss in the darkness, and in truth she had thrice come upon sheer drops and had been forced to take the most frightful risks to pass them. I shudder even now as I contemplate what this girl passed through for my sake and how she enhanced her peril in loading herself down with the weight of my arms and ammunition and the awkwardness of the long rifle which she was unaccustomed to bearing.

I could have knelt and kissed her hand in reverence and gratitude; nor am I ashamed to say that that is precisely what I did after I had been freed from my bonds and heard the story of her trials. Brave little Ajor! Wonder-girl out of the dim, unthinkable past! Never before had she been kissed; but she seemed to sense something of the meaning of the new caress, for she leaned forward in the dark and pressed her own lips to my forehead. A sudden urge surged through me to seize her and strain her to my bosom and cover her hot young lips with the kisses of a real love, but I did not do so, for I knew that I did not love her; and to have kissed her thus, with passion, would have been to inflict a great wrong upon her who had offered her life for mine.

No, Ajor should be as safe with me as with her own mother, if she had one, which I was inclined to doubt, even though she told me that she had once been a babe and hidden by her mother. I had come to doubt if there was such a thing as a mother in Caspak, a mother such as we know. From the Bo-lu to the Kro-lu there is no word which corresponds with our word *mother.* They speak of *ata* and *cor sva jo,* meaning *reproduction* and *from the beginning,* and point toward the south; but no one has a mother.

Wandering Under Ground

AFTER considerable difficulty we gained what we thought was our cave, only to find that it was not, and then we realized that we were lost in the labyrinthine mazes of the great cavern. We retraced our steps and sought the point from which we had started, but only succeeded in losing ourselves the more. Ajor was aghast—not so much from fear of our predicament; but that she should have failed in the functioning of that wonderful sense she possessed in common with most other creatures Caspakian, which makes it possible for them to move unerringly from place to place without compass or guide.

Hand in hand we crept along, searching for an opening into the outer world, yet realizing that at each step we might be burrowing more deeply into the heart of the great cliff, or circling futilely in the vague wandering that could end only in death. And the darkness! It was almost palpable, and utterly depressing. I had matches, and in some of the more difficult places I struck one; but we couldn't afford to waste them, and so we groped our way slowly along, doing the best we could to keep to one general direction in the hope that it would eventually lead us to an opening into the outer world. When I struck matches, I noticed that the walls bore no paintings; nor was there other sign that man had penetrated this far within the cliff, nor any spoor of animals of other kinds.

It would be difficult to guess at the time we spent wandering through those black corridors, climbing steep ascents, feeling our way along the edges of bottomless pits, never knowing at what moment we might be plunged into some abyss and always haunted by the ever-present terror of death by starvation and thirst. As difficult as it was, I still realized that it might have been infinitely worse had I had another companion than Ajor—courageous, uncomplaining, loyal little Ajor! She was tired and hungry and thirsty, and she must have been discouraged; but she never faltered in her cheerfulness. I asked her if she was afraid, and she replied that here the Wieroo could not get her, and that if she died of hunger, she would at least die with me, and she was quite content that such should be her end. At the time I attributed her attitude to something akin to a doglike devotion to a new master who had been kind to her. I can take oath to the fact that I did not think it was anything more.

Whether we had been imprisoned in the cliff for a day or a week I could not say; nor even now do I know. We became very tired and hungry; the hours dragged; we slept at least twice, and then we rose and stumbled on, always weaker and weaker. There were ages during which the trend of the corridors was always upward. It was heartbreaking work for people in the state of exhaustion in which we then were, but we clung tenaciously to it. We stumbled and fell; we sank through pure physical inability to retain our feet; but always we managed to rise at last and go on. At first, wherever it had been possible, we had walked hand in hand lest we become separated, and later, when I saw that Ajor was weakening rapidly, we went side by side, I supporting her with an arm about her waist. I still retained the heavy burden of my armament; but with the rifle slung to my back, my hands were free. When I too showed indisputable evidences of exhaustion, Ajor suggested that I lay aside my arms and ammunition; but I told her that as it would mean certain death for me to traverse Caspak without them, I might as well take the chance of dying here in the cave with them, for there was the other chance that we might find our way to liberty.

There came a time when Ajor could no longer walk, and then it was that I picked her up in my arms and carried her. She begged me to leave her, saying that after I found an exit, I could come back and get her; but she knew, and she knew that I knew, that if ever I did leave her, I could never find her again. Yet she insisted. I barely had sufficient strength to take a score of steps at a time; then I would have to sink down and rest for five or ten minutes. I don't know what force urged me on and kept me going in the face of an absolute conviction that my efforts were utterly futile. I counted us already as good as dead; but even so I dragged myself along until the time came when I could no longer rise, but could only crawl along a few inches at a time, dragging Ajor beside me. Her sweet voice, now almost inaudible from weakness, implored me to abandon her and save myself—she seemed to think only of me. Of course I couldn't have left her there alone, no matter how much I might have desired to do so; but the fact of the matter was that I didn't desire to leave her. What I said to her then came very simply and naturally to my lips. It couldn't very well have been otherwise, I imagine, for with death so close, I doubt if people are much inclined to heroics. "I would rather not get out at all, Ajor," I said to her, "than to get out without you." We were resting against a rocky wall, and Ajor was leaning against me, her head on my breast. I could feel her press closer to me, and one hand stroked my arm in a weak caress; but she didn't say anything, nor were words necessary.

Daylight in the Cavern and a Meeting

AFTER a few minutes' more rest, we started on again upon our utterly hopeless way; but I soon realized that I was weakening rapidly, and presently I was forced to admit that I was through. "It's no use, Ajor," I said, "I've come as far as I can. It may be that if I sleep, I can go on again after;" but I knew that that was not true, and that the end was near. "Yes, sleep," said Ajor. "We will sleep together—forever."

She crept close to me as I lay on the hard floor and pillowed her head upon my arm. With the little strength which remained to me, I drew her up until our lips touched, and then I whispered: "Good-bye!" I must have lost consciousness almost immediately, for I recall nothing more until I suddenly awoke out of a troubled sleep, during which I dreamed that I was drowning, to find the cave lighted by what appeared to be diffused daylight, and a tiny trickle of water running down the corridor and forming a puddle in the little depression in which it chanced that Ajor and I lay. I turned my eyes quickly upon Ajor, fearful for what the light might disclose; but she still breathed, though very faintly. Then I searched about for an explanation of the light, and soon discovered that it came from about a bend in the corridor just ahead of us and at the top of a steep incline; and instantly I realized that Ajor and I had stumbled by night almost to the portal of salvation. Had chance taken us a few yards further, up either of the corridors which diverged from ours just ahead of us, we might have been irrevocably lost; we might still be lost; but at least we could die in the light of day, out of the horrid blackness of this terrible cave.

I tried to rise, and found that sleep had given me back a portion of my strength; and then I tasted the water and was further refreshed. I shook Ajor gently by the shoulder; but she did not open her eyes, and then I gathered a few drops of water in my cupped palm and let them trickle between her lips. This revived her so that she raised her lids, and when she saw me, she smiled.

"What happened?" she asked. "Where are we?"

"We are at the end of the corridor," I replied, "and daylight is coming in from the outside world just ahead. We are saved, Ajor!"

She sat up then and looked about, and then, quite womanlike, she burst into tears. It was the reaction, of course; and then too, she was very weak. I took her in my arms and quieted her as best I could, and finally, with my help, she got to her feet; for she, as well as I, had found some slight recuperation in sleep. Together we staggered upward toward the light, and at the first turn we saw an opening a few yards ahead of us and a leaden sky beyond—a leaden sky from which was falling a drizzling rain, the author of our little, trickling stream which had given us drink when we were most in need of it.

The cave had been damp and cold; but as we crawled through the aperture, the muggy warmth of the Caspakian air caressed and comforted us; even the rain was warmer than the atmosphere of those dank corridors. We had water now, and warmth, and I was sure that Caspak would soon offer us meat or fruit; but as we came to where we could look about, we saw that we were upon the summit of the cliffs, where there seemed little reason to expect game. However, there were trees, and among them we soon descried edible fruits with which we broke our long fast.

CHAPTER IV

WE SPENT two days upon the cliff-top, resting and recuperating. There was some small game which gave us meat, and the little pools of rainwater were sufficient to quench our thirst. The sun came out a few hours after we emerged from the cave, and in its warmth we soon cast off the gloom which our recent experiences had saddled upon us.

Upon the morning of the third day we set out to search for a path down to the valley. Below us, to the north, we saw a large pool lying at the foot of the cliffs, and in it we could discern the women of the Band-lu lying in the shallow waters, while beyond and close to the base of the mighty barrier-cliffs there was a large party of Band-lu warriors going north to hunt. We had a splendid view from our lofty cliff-top. Dimly, to the west, we could see the farther shore of the inland sea, and southwest the large southern island loomed distinctly before us. A little east of north was the northern island, which Ajor, shuddering, whispered was the home of the Wieroo—the land of Oo-oh. It lay at the far end of the lake and was barely visible to us, being fully sixty miles away.

From our elevation, and in a clearer atmosphere, it would have stood out distinctly; but the air of Caspak is heavy with moisture, with the result that distant objects are blurred and indistinct. Ajor also told me that the mainland east of Oo-oh was her land—the land of the Galu. She pointed out the cliffs at its southern boundary, which mark the frontier, south of which lies the country of Kro-lu—the archers. We now had but to pass through the balance of the Band-lu territory and that of the Kro-lu to be within the confines of her own land; but that meant traversing thirty-five miles of hostile country filled with every imaginable terror, and possibly many beyond the powers of imagination. I would certainly have given a lot for my plane at that moment, for with it, twenty minutes would have landed us within the confines of Ajor's country.

We finally found a place where we could slip over the edge of the cliff to a narrow ledge which seemed to give evidence of being something of a game-path to the valley, though it apparently had not been used for some time. I lowered Ajor at the end of my rifle and then slid over myself, and I am free to admit that my hair stood on end during the process, for the drop was considerable and the ledge appallingly narrow, with a frightful drop sheer below down to the rocks at the base of the cliff; but with Ajor there to catch and steady me, I made it all right, and then we set off down the trail toward the valley. There were two or three more bad places, but for the most part it was an easy descent, and we came to the highest of the Band-lu caves without further trouble. Here we went more slowly, lest we should be set upon by some member of the tribe.

We must have passed about half the Band-lu cave-levels before we were accosted, and then a huge fellow stepped out in front of me, barring our further progress.

"Who are you?" he asked; and then he recognized me and I him, for he had been one of those who had led me back into the cave and bound me the night that I had been captured. From me his gaze went to Ajor. He was a fine-looking man with clear, intelligent eyes, a good forehead and superb physique—by far the highest type of Caspakian I had yet seen, barring Ajor, of course.

"You are a true Galu," he said to Ajor, "but this man is of a different mold. He has the face of a Galu, but his weapons and the strange skins he wears upon his body are not of the Galus nor of Caspak. Who is he?"

"He is Tom," replied Ajor succinctly.

"There is no such people," asserted the Band-lu quite truthfully, toying with his spear in a most suggestive manner.

Evolution of Man in Caspak

"MY name is Tom," I explained, "and I am from a country beyond Caspak." I thought it best to propitiate him if possible, because of the necessity of conserving ammunition as well as to avoid the loud alarm of a shot which might bring other Band-lu warriors upon us. "I am from America, a land of which you never heard, and I am seeking others of my countrymen who are in Caspak and from whom I am lost. I have no quarrel with you or your people. Let us go our way in peace."

"You are going there?" he asked, and pointed toward the north.

"I am," I replied.

He was silent for several minutes, apparently weighing some thought in his mind. At last he spoke. "What is that?" he asked. "And what is that?" He pointed first to my rifle and then to my pistol.

"They are weapons," I replied, "weapons which kill at a great distance." I pointed to the women in the pool beneath us. "With this," I said, tapping my pistol, "I could kill as many of those women as I cared to, without moving a step from where we now stand."

He looked his incredulity, but I went on. "And with this"—I weighed my rifle at the balance in the palm of my right hand—"I could slay one of those distant warriors." And I waved my left hand toward the tiny figures of the hunters far to the north.

The fellow laughed. "Do it," he cried derisively, "and then it may be that I shall believe the balance of your strange story."

"But I do not wish to kill any of them," I replied. "Why should I?"

"Why not?" he insisted. "They would have killed you when they had you prisoner. They would kill you now if they could get their hands on you, and they would eat you into the bargain. But I know why you do not try it—it is because you have spoken lies; your weapon will not kill at a great distance. It is only a queerly wrought club. For all I know, you are nothing more than a lowly Bo-lu."

"Why should you wish me to kill your own people?" I asked.

"They are no longer my people," he replied proudly. "Last night, in the very middle of the night, the call came to me. Like that it came into my head"—and he struck his hands together smartly once—"that I had risen. I have been waiting for it and expecting it for a long time; today I am a Kro-lu. Today I go out into the *coslupak*" (unpeopled country, or literally, no man's land) "between the Band-lu and the Kro-lu, and there I fashion my bow and my arrows and my shield; there I hunt the red deer for the leathern jerkin which is the badge of my new estate. When these things are done, I can go to the chief of the Kro-lu, and he dare not refuse me. That is why you may kill those low Band-lu if you wish to live, for I am in a hurry."

"But why do you wish to kill me?" I asked.

He looked puzzled and finally gave it up. "I do not know," he admitted. "It is the way in Caspak. If we do not kill, we shall be killed, therefore it is wise to kill first whoever does not belong to one's own people. This morning I hid in my cave till the others were gone upon the hunt, for I knew that they would know at once that I had become a Kro-lu and would kill me. They will kill me if they find me in the *coslupak;* so will the Kro-lu if they come upon me before I have won my Kro-lu weapons and jerkin. You would kill me if you could, and that is the reason I know that you speak lies when you say that your weapons will kill at a great distance. Would they, you would long since have killed me. Come! I have no more time to waste in words. I will spare the woman and take her with me to the Kro-lu, for she is comely." And with that he advanced upon me with raised spear.

The Cave Lion

MY rifle was at my hip at the ready. He was so close that I did not need to raise it to my shoulder, having but to pull the trigger to send him into Kingdom Come whenever I chose; but yet I hesitated. It was difficult to bring myself to take a human life. I could feel no enmity toward this savage barbarian who acted almost as wholly upon instinct as might a wild beast, and to the last moment I was determined to seek some way to avoid what now seemed inevitable. Ajor stood at my shoulder, her knife ready in her hand and a sneer on her lips at his suggestion that he would take her with him.

Just as I thought I should have to fire, a chorus of screams broke from the women beneath us. I saw the man halt and glance downward, and following his example my eyes took in the panic and its cause. The women had, evidently, been quitting the pool and slowly returning toward the caves, when they were confronted by a monstrous cave-lion which stood directly between them and their cliffs in the center of the narrow path that led down to the pool among the tumbled rocks. Screaming, the women were rushing madly back to the pool.

"It will do them no good," remarked the man, a trace of excitement in his voice. "It will do them no good, for the lion will wait until they come out and take as many as he can carry away; and there is one there," he added, a trace of sadness in his tone, "who I hoped would soon follow me to the Kro-lu. Together have we come up from the beginning." He raised his spear above his head and poised it ready to hurl downward at the lion. "She is nearest to him," he muttered. "He will get her and she will never come to me among the Kro-lu, or ever thereafter. It is useless! No warrior lives who could hurl a weapon so great a distance."

But even as he spoke, I was leveling my rifle upon the great brute below; and as he ceased speaking, I squeezed the trigger. My bullet must have struck to a hair the point at which I had aimed, for it smashed the brute's spine back of his shoulders and tore on through his heart, dropping him dead in his tracks. For a moment the women were as terrified by the report of the rifle as they had been by the menace of the lion; but when they saw that the loud noise had evidently destroyed their enemy, they came creeping cautiously back to examine the carcass.

The man, toward whom I had immediately turned after firing, lest he should pursue his threatened attack, stood staring at me in amazement and admiration.

"Why," he asked, "if you could do that, did you not kill me long before?"

"I told you," I replied, "that I had no quarrel with you. I do not care to kill men with whom I have no quarrel."

But he could not seem to get the idea through his head. "I can believe now that you are not of Caspak," he admitted, "for no Caspakian would have permitted such an opportunity to escape him." This, however, I found later to be an exaggeration, as the tribes of the west coast and even the Kro-lu of the east coast are far less bloodthirsty than he would have had me believe. "And your weapon!" he continued. "You spoke true words when I thought you spoke lies." And then, suddenly: "Let us be friends!"

I turned to Ajor. "Can I trust him?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied. "Why not? Has he not asked to be friends?"

I was not at the time well enough acquainted with Caspakian ways to know that truthfulness and loyalty are two of the strongest characteristics of these primitive people. They are not sufficiently cultured to have become adepts in hypocrisy, treason and dissimulation. There are, of course, a few exceptions.

"We can go north together," continued the warrior. "I will fight for you, and you can fight for me. Until death will I serve you, for you have saved So-al, whom I had given up as dead." He threw down his spear and covered both his eyes with the palms of his two hands. I looked inquiringly toward Ajor, who explained as best she could that this was the form of the Caspakian oath of allegiance. "You need never fear him after this," she concluded.

"What should I do?" I asked.

"Take his hands down from before his eyes and return his spear to him," she explained.

I did as she bade, and the man seemed very pleased. I then asked what I should have done had I not wished to accept his friendship. They told me that had I walked away, the moment that I was out of sight of the warrior we would have become deadly enemies again. "But I could so easily have killed him as he stood there defenseless!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," replied the warrior, "but no man with good sense blinds his eyes before one whom he does not trust."

It was rather a decent compliment, and it taught me just how much I might rely on the loyalty of my new friend. I was glad to have him with us, for he knew the country and was evidently a fearless warrior. I wished that I might have recruited a battalion like him.

As the women were now approaching the cliffs, To-mar the warrior suggested that we make our way to the valley before they could intercept us, as they might attempt to detain us and were almost certain to set upon Ajor. So we hastened down the narrow path, reaching the foot of the cliffs but a short distance ahead of the women. They called after us to stop; but we kept on at a rapid walk, not wishing to have any trouble with them, which could only result in the death of some of them.

We had proceeded about a mile when we heard some one behind us calling To-mar by name, and when we stopped and looked around, we saw a woman running rapidly toward us. As she approached nearer, I could see that she was a very comely creature, and like all her sex that I had seen in Caspak, apparently young.

"It is So-al!" exclaimed To-mar. "Is she mad that she follows me thus?"

In another moment the young woman stopped, panting, before us. She paid not the slightest attention to Ajor or me; but devouring To-mar with her sparkling eyes, she cried: "I have risen! I have risen!"

"So-al!" was all that the man could say.

"Yes," she went on, "the call came to me just before I quit the pool; but I did not know that it had come to you. I can see it in your eyes, To-mar, my To-mar! We shall go on together!" And she threw herself into his arms.

It was a very affecting sight, for it was evident that these two had been mates for a long time and that they had each thought that they were about to be separated by that strange law of evolution which holds good in Caspak and which was slowly unfolding before my incredulous mind. I did not then comprehend even a tithe of the wondrous process, which goes on eternally within the confines of Caprona's barrier cliffs nor am I too sure that I do even now.

To-mar explained to So-al that it was I who had killed the cave-lion and saved her life, and that Ajor was my woman and thus entitled to the same loyalty which was my due.

At first Ajor and So-al were like a couple of stranger cats on a back fence, but soon they began to accept each other under something of an armed truce, and later became fast friends. So-al was a mighty fine-looking girl, built like a tigress as to strength and sinuosity, but withal sweet and womanly. Ajor and I came to be very fond of her, and she was, I think, equally fond of us. To-mar was very much of a man—a savage, if you will, but none the less a man.

Finding that traveling in company with To-mar made our journey both easier and safer, Ajor and I did not continue on our way alone while the novitiates delayed their approach to the Kro-lu country in order that they might properly fit themselves in the matter of arms and apparel, but remained with them. Thus we became well acquainted—to such an extent that we looked forward with regret to the day when they took their places among their new comrades and we should be forced to continue upon our way alone. It was a matter of much concern to To-mar that the Kro-lu would undoubtedly not receive Ajor and me in a friendly manner, and that consequently we should have to avoid these people.

It would have been very helpful to us could we have made friends with them, as their country abutted directly upon that of the Galus. Their friendship would have meant that Ajor's dangers were practically passed, and that I had accomplished fully one-half of my long journey. In view of what I had passed through, I often wondered what chance I had to complete that journey in search of my friends. The further south I should travel on the west side of the island, the more frightful would the dangers become as I neared the stamping-grounds of the more hideous reptilia and the haunts of the Alus and the Ho-lu, all of which were at the southern half of the island; and then if I should not find the members of my party, what was to become of me? I could not live for long in any portion of Caspak with which I was familiar; the moment my ammunition was exhausted, I should be as good as dead.

There was a chance that the Galus would receive me; but even Ajor could not say definitely whether they would or no, and even provided they would, could I retrace my steps from *the beginning*, after failing to find my own people, and return to the far northern land of Galus? I doubted it. However, I was learning from Ajor, who was more or less of a fatalist, a philosophy which was as necessary in Caspak to peace of mind as is faith to the devout Christian of the outer world.

CHAPTER V

We were sitting before a little fire inside a safe grotto one night shortly after we had quit the cliff-dwellings of the Band-lu, when So-al raised a question which it had never occurred to me to propound to Ajor. She asked her why she had left her own people and how she had come so far south as the country of the Alus, where I had found her.

At first Ajor hesitated to explain; but at last she consented, and for the first time I heard the complete story of her origin and experiences. For my benefit she entered into greater detail of explanation than would have been necessary had I been a native Caspakian.

"I am a *cos-ata-lo*," commenced Ajor, and then she turned toward me. "A *cos-ata-lo*, my Tom, is a woman" (*lo*) "who did not come from an egg and thus on up *from the beginning*" (*cor svq jo*). "I was a babe at my mother's breast. Only among the Galus are such, and then but infrequently. The Wieroo get most of us; but my mother hid me until I had attained such size that the Wieroo could not readily distinguish me from one who had come up from the beginning. I knew both my mother and my father, as only such as I may. My father is high chief among the Galus. His name is Jor, and both he and my mother came up from the beginning; but one of them, probably my mother, had completed the seven cycles" (Approximately seven hundred years), "with the result that their offspring might be *cos-ata-lo*, or born as are all the children of your race, my Tom, as you tell me is the fact. I was therefore apart from my fellows in that my children would probably be as I, of a higher state of evolution, and so I was sought by the men of my people; but none of them appealed to me. I cared for none. The most persistent was Du-seen, a huge warrior of whom my father stood in considerable fear, since it was quite possible that Du-seen could wrest from him his chieftainship of the Galus. He has a large following of the newer Galus, those most recently come up from the Kro-lu, and as this class is usually much more powerful numerically than the older Galus, and as Du-seen's ambition knows no bounds, we have for a long time been expecting him to find some excuse for a break with Jor the High Chief, my father.

"A further complication lay in the fact that Du-seen wanted me, while I would have none of him, and then came evidence to my father's ears that he was in league with the Wieroo; a hunter, returning late at night, came trembling to my father, saying that he had seen Du-seen talking with a Wieroo in a lonely spot far from the village, and that plainly he had heard the words: 'If you will help me, I will help you—I will deliver into your hands all *cos-ata-lo* among the Galus, now and hereafter; but for that service you must slay Jor the High Chief and bring terror and confusion to his followers.'

"Now, when my father heard this, he was angry; but he was also afraid—afraid for me, who am *cos-ata-lo*. He called me to him and told me what he had heard, pointing out two ways in which we might frustrate Du-seen. The first was that I go to Du-seen as his mate, after which he would be loath to give me into the hands of the Wieroo or to further abide by the wicked compact he had made—a compact which would doom his own offspring, who would doubtless be as am I, their mother. The alternative was flight until Du-seen should have been overcome and punished. I chose the latter and fled toward the south. Beyond the confines of the Galu country is little danger from the Wieroo, who seek ordinarily only Galus of the highest orders. There are two excellent reasons for this: One is that from the beginning of time jealousy has existed between the Wieroo and the Galus as to which constituted the higher order and therefore which would eventually dominate the world. It seems generally conceded that that race which first reaches a point of evolution which permits them to produce young of their own species and of both sexes must dominate all other creatures. The Wieroo first began to produce their own kind—after which evolution from Galu to Wieroo ceased gradually until now it is unknown; but the Wieroo produce only males—which is why they steal our female young, and by stealing *cos-ata-lo* they increase their own chances of eventually reproducing both sexes and at the same time lessen ours. Already the Galus produce both male and female; but so carefully do the Wieroo watch us that few of the males ever grow to manhood, while even fewer are the females that are not stolen away. It is indeed a strange condition, for while our greatest enemies hate and fear us, they dare not exterminate us, knowing that they too would become extinct but for us.

"Ah, but could we once get a start, I am sure that when all were true *cos-ata-lo* there would have been evolved at last the true dominant race before which all the world would be forced to bow."

A Strange Tale of Trouble Continued

AJOR always spoke of the world as though nothing existed beyond Caspak. She could not seem to grasp the truth of my origin or the fact that there were countless other peoples outside her stern barrier-cliffs. She apparently felt that I came from an entirely different world. Where it was and how I came to Caspak from it were matters quite beyond her with which she refused to trouble her pretty head.

"Well," she continued, "and so I ran away to hide, intending to pass the cliffs to the south of Galu and find a retreat in the Kro-lu country. It would be dangerous, but there seemed no other way.

"The third night I took refuge in a large cave in the cliffs at the edge of my own country; upon the following day I would cross over into the Kro-lu country, where I felt that I should be reasonably safe from the Wieroo, though menaced by countless other dangers. However, to a *cos-ata-lo* any fate is preferable to that of falling into the clutches of the frightful Wieroo, from whose land none returns.

"I had been sleeping peacefully for several hours when I was awakened by a slight noise within the cavern. The moon was shining brightly, illumining the entrance, against which I saw silhouetted the dread figure of a Wieroo. There was no escape. The cave was shallow, the entrance narrow. I lay very still, hoping against hope, that the creature had but paused here to rest and might soon depart without discovering me; yet all the while I knew that he came seeking me.

"I waited, scarce breathing, watching the thing creep stealthily toward me, its great eyes luminous in the darkness of the cave's interior, and at last I knew that those eyes were directed upon me, for the Wieroo can see in the darkness better than even the lion or the tiger. But a few feet separated us when I sprang to my feet and dashed madly toward my menacer in a vain effort to dodge past him and reach the outside world. It was madness, of course, for even had I succeeded temporarily, the Wieroo would have followed me and swooped down upon me from above. As it was, he reached forth and seized me, and though I struggled, he overpowered me. In the duel his long, white robe was nearly torn from him, and he became very angry, so that he trembled and beat his wings together in his rage.

"He asked me my name; but I would not answer him, and that angered him still more. At last he dragged me to the entrance of the cave, lifted me in his arms, spread his great wings and leaping into the air, flapped dismally through the night. I saw the moonlit landscape sliding away beneath me, and then we were out above the sea and on our way to Oo-oh, the country of the Wieroo.

"The dim outlines of Oo-oh were unfolding below us when there came from above a loud whirring of giant wings. The Wieroo and I glanced up simultaneously, to see a pair of huge *jo-oos*" (flying reptiles—pterodactyls) "swooping down upon us. The Wieroo wheeled and dropped almost to sea-level, and then raced southward in an effort to outdistance our pursuers. The great creatures, notwithstanding their enormous weight, are swift on their wings; but the Wieroo are swifter. Even with my added weight, the creature that bore me maintained his lead, though he could not increase it. Faster than the fastest wind we raced through the night, southward along the coast. Sometimes we rose to great heights, where the air was chill and the world below but a blur of dim outlines; but always the jo-oos stuck close behind us.

"I knew that we had covered a great distance, for the rush of the wind by my face attested the speed of our progress, but I had no idea where we were when at last I realized that the Wieroo was weakening. One of the jo-oos gained on us and succeeded in heading us, so that my captor had to turn in toward the coast. Further and further they forced him to the left; lower and lower he sank. More labored was his breathing, and weaker the stroke of his once powerful wings. We were not ten feet above the ground when they overtook us, and at the edge of a forest. One of them seized the Wieroo by his right wing, and in an effort to free himself, he loosed his grasp upon me, dropping me to earth. Like a frightened *ecca* I leaped to my feet and raced for the sheltering sanctuary of the forest, where I knew neither could follow or seize me. Then I turned and looked back to see two great reptiles tear my abductor asunder and devour him on the spot.

"I was saved; yet I felt that I was lost. How far I was from the country of the Galus I could but guess; nor did it seem probable that I ever could make my way in safety to my native land.

"Day was breaking; soon the carnivora would stalk forth for their first kill; I was armed only with my knife. About me was a strange landscape —the flowers, the trees, the grasses, even, were different from those of my northern world, and presently there appeared before me a creature fully as hideous as the Wieroo—a hairy man-thing that barely walked erect. I shuddered, and then I fled. Through the hideous dangers that my forbears had endured in the earlier stages of their human evolution I fled; and always pursuing was the hairy monster that had discovered me. Later he was joined by others of his kind. They were the speechless men, the Alus, from whom you rescued me, my Tom. From then on, you know the story of my adventures, and from the first, I would endure them all again because they led me to you!"

It was very nice of her to say that, and I appreciated it. I felt that she was a mighty nice little girl whose friendship anyone might be glad to have; but I wished that when she touched me, those peculiar thrills would not run through me. It was most discomforting, because it reminded me of love; and I knew that I never could love this half-baked little barbarian. I was very much interested in her account of the Wieroo, which up to this time I had considered a purely mythological creature; but Ajor shuddered so at even the least mention of the name that I was loath to press the subject upon her, and so the Wieroo still remained a mystery to me.

The Caspakian Races Explained

WHILE the Wieroo interested me greatly, I had little time to think about them, as our waking hours were filled with the necessities of existence—the constant battle for survival which is the chief occupation of the Caspakians. To-mar and So-al were now about fitted for their advent into Kro-lu society and must therefore leave us, as we could not accompany them without incurring great danger ourselves and running the chance of endangering them; but each swore to be always our friend and assured us that should we need their aid at any time we had but to ask it; nor could I doubt their sincerity, since we had been so instrumental in bringing them safely upon their journey toward the Kro-lu village.

This was our last day together. In the afternoon we should separate, To-mar and So-al going directly to the Kro-lu village, while Ajor and I made a detour to avoid a conflict with the archers. The former both showed evidence of nervous apprehension as the time approached for them to make their entry into the village of their new people, and yet both were very proud and happy. They told us that they would be well received as additions to a tribe always are welcomed, and the more so as the distance from the beginning increased, the higher tribes or races being far weaker numerically than the lower. The southern end of the island fairly swarms with the Ho-lu, or apes; next above these are the Alus, who are slightly fewer in numbers than the Ho-lu; and again there are fewer Bo-lu than Alus, and fewer Sto-lu than Bo-lu. Thus it goes until the Kro-lu are fewer in number than any of the others; and here the law reverses, for the Galus outnumber the Kro-lu. As Ajor explained it to me, the reason for this is that as evolution practically ceases with the Galus, there is no loss among them on this score, for even the *cos-ata-lo* are still considered Galus and remain with them. And Galus come up both from the west and east coasts. There are, too, fewer carnivorous reptiles at the north end of the island, and not so many of the great and ferocious members of the cat family as take their hideous toll of life among the races further south.

By now I was obtaining some idea of the Caspakian scheme of evolution, which partly accounted for the lack of young among the races I had so far seen. Coming up from the beginning, the Caspakian passes, during a single existence, through the various stages of evolution, or at least many of them, through which the human race has passed during the countless ages since life first stirred upon a new world; but the question which continued to puzzle me was: What creates life at the beginning, *cor sva jo?*

I had noticed that as we traveled northward from the Alus' country the land had gradually risen until we were now several hundred feet above the level of the inland sea. Ajor told me that the Galu country was still higher and considerably colder, which accounted for the scarcity of reptiles. The change in form and kinds of the lower animals was even more marked than the evolutionary stages of man. The diminutive *ecca*, or small horse, became a rough-coated and sturdy little pony in the Kro-lu country. I saw a greater number of small lions and tigers, though many of the huge ones still persisted, while the wooly mammoth was more in evidence, as were several varieties of the Labyrinthadonta. These creatures, from which God save me, I should have expected to find further south; but for some unaccountable reason they gain their greatest bulk in the Kro-lu and Galu countries, though fortunately they are rare. I rather imagine that they are a very early form of life which is rapidly nearing extinction in Caspak, though wherever they are found, they constitute a menace to all forms of life.

It was mid-afternoon when To-mar and So-al bade us good-bye. We were not far from the Kro-lu village; in fact, we had approached it much closer than we had intended, and now Ajor and I were to make a detour toward the sea while our companions went directly in search of the Kro-lu chief.

Ajor and I had gone perhaps a mile or two and were just about to emerge from a dense wood when I saw that ahead of us which caused me to draw back into concealment, at the same time pushing Ajor behind me. What I saw was a party of Band-lu warriors—large, fierce-appearing men. From the direction of their march I saw that they were returning to their caves, and that if we remained where we were, they would pass without discovering us.

Presently Ajor nudged me. "They have a prisoner," she whispered. "He is a Kro-lu."

A Prisoner of a Higher Race

AND then I saw him, the first fully developed Kro-lu I had seen. He was a fine-looking savage, tall and straight, with a regal carriage. To-mar was a handsome fellow; but this Kro-lu showed plainly in his every physical attribute a higher plane of evolution. While To-mar was just entering the Kro-lu sphere, this man, it seemed to me, must be close indeed to the next stage of his development, which would see him an envied Galu.

"They will kill him?" I whispered to Ajor.

"The dance of death," she replied, and I shuddered, so recently had I escaped the same fate. It seemed cruel that one who must have passed safely up through all the frightful stages of human evolution within Caspak, should die at the very foot of his goal. I raised my rifle to my shoulder and took careful aim at one of the Band-lu. If I hit him, I would hit two, for another was directly behind the first.

Ajor touched my arm. "What would you do?" she asked. "They are all our enemies."

"I am going to save him from the dance of death," I replied, "enemy or no enemy," and I squeezed the trigger. At the report, the two Band-lu lunged forward upon their faces. I handed my rifle to Ajor, and drawing my pistol, stepped out in full view of the startled party. The Band-lu did not run away as had some of the lower orders of Caspakians at the sound of the rifle. Instead, the moment they saw me, they let out a series of demoniac war-cries, and raising their spears above their heads, charged me.

The Kro-lu stood silent and statuesque, watching the proceedings. He made no attempt to escape, though his feet were not bound and none of the warriors remained to guard him. There were ten of the Band-lu coming for me. I dropped three of them with my pistol as rapidly as a man might count to three, and then my rifle spoke close to my left shoulder, and another of them stumbled and rolled over and over upon the ground. Plucky little Ajor! She had never fired a shot before in all her life, though I had taught her to sight and aim and how to squeeze the trigger instead of pulling it. She had practised these new accomplishments often, but little had I thought they would make a marksman of her so quickly.

With six of their fellows put out of the fight so easily, the remaining six sought cover behind some low bushes and commenced a council of war. I wished that they would go away, as I had no ammunition to waste, and I was fearful that should they institute another charge, some of them would reach us, for they were already quite close. Suddenly one of them rose and launched his spear. It was the most marvelous exhibition of speed I have ever witnessed. It seemed to me that he had scarce gained an upright position when the weapon was halfway upon its journey, speeding like an arrow toward Ajor. And then it was, with that little life in danger, that I made the best shot I have ever made in my life. I took no conscious aim; it was as though my subconscious mind, impelled by a stronger power even than that of self-preservation, directed my hand. Ajor was in danger! Simultaneously with the thought my pistol flew to position, a streak of incandescent powder marked the path of the bullet from its muzzle; and the spear, its point shattered, was deflected from its path. With a howl of dismay the six Band-lu rose from their shelter and raced away toward the south.

I turned toward Ajor. She was very white and wide-eyed, for the clutching fingers of death had all but seized her; but a little smile came to her lips and an expression of great pride to her eyes. "My Tom!" she said, and took my hand in hers. That was all—"My Tom!" and a pressure of the hand. Her Tom! Something stirred within my bosom. Was it exaltation or was it consternation? Impossible. I turned away almost brusquely.

"Come!" I said, and strode off toward the Kro-lu prisoner.

The Kro-lu stood watching us with stolid indifference. I presume that he expected to be killed; but if he did, he showed no outward sign of fear. His eyes, indicating his greatest interest, were fixed upon my pistol or the rifle which Ajor still carried. I cut his bonds with my knife. As I did so, an expression of surprise tinged and animated the haughty reserve of his countenance. He eyed me quizzically.

"What are you going to do with me?" he asked.

"You are free," I replied. "Go home, if you wish."

"Why don't you kill me?" he inquired. "I am defenseless."

"Why should I kill you? I have risked my life and that of this young lady to save your life. Why, therefore should I now take it?" Of course, I didn't say "young lady" as there is no Caspakian equivalent for that term; but I have to allow myself considerable latitude in the translation of Caspakian conversation. To speak always of a beautiful young girl as a "she" may be literal; but it seems far from gallant.

The Enmity of the Different Races

THE Kro-lu concentrated his steady, level gaze upon me for at least a full minute. Then he spoke again.

"Who are you, man of strange skins?" he asked. "Your she is Galu; but you are neither Galu nor Kro-lu nor Band-lu, nor any other sort of man which I have seen before. Tell me from whence comes so mighty a warrior and so generous a foe."

"It is a long story," I replied; "but suffice it to say that I am not of Caspak. I am a stranger here, and—let this sink in—I am not a foe. I have no wish to be an enemy of any man in Caspak, with the possible exception of the Galu warrior Du-seen."

"Du-seen!" he exclaimed. "You are an enemy of Du-seen? And why?"

"Because he would harm Ajor," I replied. "You know him?"

"He cannot know him," said Ajor. "Du-seen rose from the Kro-lu long ago, taking a new name, as all do when they enter a new sphere. He cannot know him, as there is no intercourse between the Kro-lu and the Galu."

The warrior smiled. "Du-seen rose not so long ago," he said, "that I do not recall him well, and recently he has taken it upon himself to abrogate the ancient laws of Caspak; he has had intercourse with the Kro-lu. Du-seen would be chief of the Galus, and he has come to the Kro-lu for help."

Ajor was aghast. The thing was incredible. Never had Kro-lu and Galu had friendly relations; by the savage laws of Caspak they were deadly enemies, for only so can the several races maintain their individuality.

"Will the Kro-lu join him?" asked Ajor. "Will they invade the country of Jor, my father?"

"The younger Kro-lu favor the plan," replied the warrior, "since they believe they will thus become Galus immediately. They hope to span the long years of change through which they must pass in the ordinary course of events and at a single stride become Galus. We of the older Kro-lu tell them that though they occupy the land of the Galu and wear the skins and ornaments of the golden people, still they will not be Galus till the time arrives that they are ripe to rise. We also tell them that even then they will never become a true Galu race, since there will still be those among them who can never rise. It is all right to raid the Galu country occasionally for plunder, as our people do; but to attempt to conquer it and hold it is madness. For my part, I have been content to wait until the call came to me. I feel that it cannot now be long."

"What is your name?" asked Ajor.

"Chal-az," replied the man.

"You are chief of the Kro-lu?" Ajor continued.

"No, it is Al-tan who is chief of the Kro-lu of the east," answered Chal-az.

"And he is against this plan to invade my father's country?"

"Unfortunately he is rather in favor of it," replied the man, "since he has about come to the conclusion that he is *batu*. He has been chief ever since before I came up from the Band-lu, and I can see no change in him in all those years. In fact, he still appears to be more Band-lu than Kro-lu. However, he is a good chief and a mighty warrior, and if Du-seen persuades him to his cause, the Galus may find themselves under a Kro-lu chieftain before long—Du-seen as well as the others, for Al-tan would never consent to occupy a subordinate position, and once he plants a victorious foot in Galu, he will not withdraw it without a struggle."

I asked them what *batu* meant, as I had not before heard the word. Literally translated, it is equivalent to *through, finished, done-for*, as applied to an individual's evolutionary progress in Caspak, and with this information was developed the interesting fact that not every individual is capable of rising through every stage to that of Galu. Some never progress beyond the Alu stage, others stop as Bo-lu, as Sto-lu, as Band-lu or as Kro-lu. The Ho-lu of the first generation may rise to become Alus; the Alus of the second generation may become Bo-lu, while it requires three generations of Bo-lu to become Band-lu, and so on until the Kro-lu's parent on one side must be of the sixth generation.

It was not entirely plain to me even with this explanation, since I couldn't understand how there could be different generations of peoples who apparently had no offspring. Yet I was commencing to get a slight glimmer of the strange laws which govern propagation and evolution in this weird land. Already I knew that the warm pools which always lie close to every tribal abiding-place were closely linked with the Caspakian scheme of evolution, and that the daily immersion of the females in the greenish slimy water was in response to some natural law, since neither pleasure nor cleanliness could be derived from what seemed almost a religious rite. Yet I was still at sea, and seemingly, Ajor could not enlighten me, since she was compelled to use words which I could not understand and which it was impossible for her to explain the meanings of.

"She Is Mine!" A Competition

AS we stood talking, we were suddenly startled by a commotion in the bushes and among the boles of the trees surrounding us, and simultaneously a hundred Kro-lu warriors appeared in a rough circle about us. They greeted Chal-az with a volley of questions as they approached slowly from all sides, their heavy bows fitted with long, sharp arrows. Upon Ajor and me they looked with covetousness in the one instance and suspicion in the other; but after they had heard Chal-az's story, their attitude was more friendly. A huge savage did all the talking. He was a mountain of a man, yet perfectly proportioned.

"This is Al-tan the chief," said Chal-az by way of introduction. Then he told something of my story, and Al-tan asked me many questions of the land from which I came. The warriors crowded around close to hear my replies, and there were many expressions of incredulity as I spoke of what was to them another world, of the yacht which had brought me over vast waters, and of the plane that had borne me Jo-oo-like over the summit of the barrier-cliffs. It was the mention of the hydro-aeroplane which precipitated the first outspoken skepticism, and then Ajor came to my defense.

"I saw it with my own eyes!" she exclaimed. "I saw him flying through the air in battle with a Jo-oo. The Alus were chasing me, and they saw and ran away."

"Whose is this she?" demanded Al-tan suddenly, his eyes fixed fiercely upon Ajor.

For a moment there was silence. Ajor looked up at me, a hurt and questioning expression on her face. "Whose she is this?" repeated Al-tan.

"She is mine," I replied, though what force it was that impelled me to say it I could not have told; but an instant later I was glad that I had spoken the words, for the reward of Ajor's proud and happy face was reward indeed.

Al-tan eyed her for several minutes and then turned to me. "Can you keep her?" he asked, just the tinge of a sneer upon his face.

I laid my palm upon the grip of my pistol and answered that I could. He saw the move, glanced at the butt of the automatic where it protruded from its holster, and smiled. Then he turned and raising his great bow, fitted an arrow and drew the shaft far back. His warriors, supercilious smiles upon their faces, stood silently watching him. His bow was the longest and the heaviest among them all. A mighty man indeed must he be to bend it; yet Al-tan drew the shaft back until stone point touched his left forefinger, and he did it with consummate ease. Then he raised the shaft to the level of his right eye, held it there for an instant and released it. When the arrow stopped, half its length protruded from the opposite side of a six-inch tree fifty feet way. Al-tan and his warriors turned toward me with expressions of immense satisfaction upon their faces, and then, apparently for Ajor's benefit, the chieftain swaggered to and fro a couple of times, swinging his great arms and his bulky shoulders for all the world like a drunken prize-fighter at a beach dance-hall.

I saw that some reply was necessary, and so in a single motion, I drew my gun, dropped it on the still quivering arrow and pulled the trigger. At the sound of the report, the Kro-lu leaped back and raised their weapons; but as I was smiling, they took heart and lowered them again, following my eyes to the tree; the shaft of their chief was gone, and through the bole was a little round hole marking the path of my bullet. It was a good shot if I do say it myself, "as shouldn't;" but necessity must have guided that bullet; I simply *had* to make a good shot, that I might immediately establish my position among those savage and warlike Caspakians of the sixth sphere. That it had its effect was immediately noticeable, but I am none too sure that it helped my cause with Al-tan. Whereas he might have condescended to tolerate me as a harmless and interesting curiosity, he now, by the change in his expression, appeared to consider me in a new and unfavorable light. Nor can I wonder, knowing this type as I did, for had I not made him ridiculous in the eyes of his warriors, beating him at his own game? What king, savage or civilized, could condone such impudence? Seeing his black scowls, I deemed it expedient, especially on Ajor's account, to terminate the interview and continue upon our way; but when I would have done so, Al-tan detained us with a gesture, and his warriors pressed around us.

A Duel with a Saber-tooth Tiger

"WHAT is the meaning of this?" I demanded, and before Al-tan could reply, Chal-az raised his voice in our behalf.

"Is this the gratitude of a Kro-lu chieftain, Al-tan," he asked, "to one who has served you by saving one of your warriors from the enemy—saving him from the death dance of the Band-lu?"

Al-tan was silent for a moment, and then his brow cleared, and the faint imitation of a pleasant expression struggled for existence as he said: "The stranger will not be harmed. I wished only to detain him that he may be feasted tonight in the village of Al-tan the Kro-lu. In the morning he may go his way. Al-tan will not hinder him."

I was not entirely reassured; but I wanted to see the interior of the Kro-lu village, and anyway I knew that if Al-tan intended treachery I would be no more in his power in the morning than I now was—in fact, during the night I might find opportunity to escape with Ajor, while at the instant neither of us could hope to escape unscathed from the encircling warriors. Therefore, in order to disarm him of any thought that I might entertain suspicion as to his sincerity, I promptly and courteously accepted his invitation. His satisfaction was evident, and as we set off toward his village, he walked beside me, asking many questions as to the country from which I came, its peoples and their customs. He seemed much mystified by the fact that we could walk abroad by day or night without fear of being devoured by wild beasts or savage reptiles, and when I told him of the great armies which we maintained, his simple mind could not grasp the fact that they existed solely for the slaughtering of human beings.

"I am glad," he said, "that I do not dwell in your country among such savage peoples. Here, in Caspak, men fight with men when they meet—men of different races—but their weapons are first for the slaying of beasts in the chase and in defense. We do not fashion weapons solely for the killing of man as do your peoples. Your country must indeed be a savage country, from which you are fortunate to have escaped to the peace and security of Caspak."

Here was a new and refreshing viewpoint; nor could I take exception to it after what I had told Al-tan of the great war which had been raging in Europe for over two years before I left home.

On the march to the Kro-lu village we were continually stalked by innumerable beasts of prey, and three times we were attacked by frightful creatures; but Al-tan took it all as a matter of course, rushing forward with raised spear or sending a heavy shaft into the body of the attacker and then returning to our conversation as though no interruption had occurred. Twice were members of his band mauled, and one was killed by a huge and bellicose rhinoceros; but the instant the action was over, it was as though it never had occurred. The dead man was stripped of his belongings and left where he had died; the carnivora would take care of his burial. The trophies that these Kro-lu left to the meat-eaters would have turned an English big-game hunter green with envy. They did, it is true, cut all the edible parts from the rhino and carry them home; but already they were pretty well weighted down with the spoils of the chase, and only the fact that they are particularly fond of rhino-meat caused them to do so.

They left the hide on the pieces they selected, as they use it for sandals, shield-covers, the hilts of their knives and various other purposes where tough hide is desirable. I was much interested in their shields, especially after I saw one used in defense against the attack of a saber-tooth tiger. The huge creature had charged us without warning from a clump of dense bushes where it was lying up after eating. It was met with an avalanche of spears, some of which passed entirely through its body, with such force were they hurled. The charge was from a very short distance, requiring the use of the spear rather than the bow and arrow; but after the launching of the spears, the men not directly in the path of the charge sent bolt after bolt into the great carcass with almost incredible rapidity. The beast, screaming with pain and rage, bore down upon Chal-az while I stood helpless with my rifle for fear of hitting one of the warriors who were closing in upon it. But Chal-az was ready. Throwing aside his bow, he crouched behind his large oval shield, in the center of which was a hole about six inches in diameter. The shield was held by tight loops to his left arm, while in his right hand he grasped his heavy knife. Bristling with spears and arrows, the great cat hurled itself upon the shield, and down went Chal-az upon his back with the shield entirely covering him. The tiger clawed and bit at the heavy rhinoceros hide with which the shield was faced, while Chal-az, through the round hole in the shield's center, plunged his blade repeatedly into the vitals of the savage animal. Doubtless the battle would have gone to Chal-az even though I had not interfered; but the moment that I saw a clean opening, with no Kro-lu beyond, I raised my rifle and killed the beast.

The Caspak Village

WHEN Chal-az arose, he glanced at the sky and remarked that it looked like rain. The others already had resumed the march toward the village. The incident was closed. For some unaccountable reason the whole thing reminded me of a friend of mine who once shot a cat in his backyard. For three weeks he talked of nothing else.

It was almost dark when we reached the village—a large palisaded inclosure of several hundred leaf-thatched huts set in groups of from two to seven. The huts were hexagonal in form, and where grouped were joined so that they resembled the cells of a beehive. One hut meant a warrior and his mate, and each additional hut in a group indicated an additional female. The palisade which surrounded the village was of logs set close together and woven into a solid wall with tough creepers which were planted at their base and trained to weave in and out to bind the logs together. The logs slanted outward at an angle of about thirty degrees, in which position they were held by shorter logs embedded in the ground at right angles to them and with their upper ends supporting the longer pieces a trifle above their centers of equilibrium. Along the top of the palisade sharpened stakes had been driven at all sorts of angles.

The only opening into the inclosure was through a small aperture three feet wide and three feet high, which was closed from the inside by logs about six feet long laid horizontally, one upon another, between the inside face of the palisade and two other braced logs which paralleled the face of the wall upon the inside.

As we entered the village, we were greeted by a not unfriendly crowd of curious warriors and women, to whom Chal-az generously explained the service we had rendered him, whereupon they showered us with the most well-meant attentions, for Chal-az, it seemed, was a most popular member of the tribe. Necklaces of lion- and tiger-teeth, bits of dried meat, finely tanned hides and earthen pots, beautifully decorated, they thrust upon us until we were loaded down, and all the while Al-tan glared balefully upon us, seemingly jealous of the attentions heaped upon us because we had served Chal-az.

At last we reached a hut that they set apart for us, and there we cooked our meat and some vegetables the women brought us, and had milk from cows—the first I had had in Caspak—and cheese from the milk of wild goats, with honey and thin bread made from wheat flour of their own grinding, and grapes and the fermented juice of grapes. It was quite the most wonderful meal I had eaten since I quit the *Toreador* and Bowen J. Tyler's colored chef, who could make pork-chops taste like chicken, and chicken taste like heaven.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER dinner I rolled a cigaret and stretched myself at ease upon a pile of furs before the doorway, with Ajor's head pillowed in my lap and a feeling of great content pervading me. It was the first time since my plane had topped the barrier-cliffs of Caspak that I had felt any sense of peace or security. My hand wandered to the velvet cheek of the girl I had claimed as mine, and to her luxuriant hair and the golden fillet which bound it close to her shapely head. Her slender fingers groping upward sought mine and drew them to her lips, and then I gathered her in my arms and crushed her to me, smothering her mouth with a long, long kiss. It was the first time that passion had tinged my intercourse with Ajor. We were alone, and the hut was ours until morning.

But now from beyond the palisade in the direction of the main gate came the hallooing of men and the answering calls and queries of the guard. We listened. Returning hunters, no doubt. We heard them enter the village amidst the barking dogs. I have forgotten to mention the dogs of the Kro-lu. The village swarmed with them, gaunt, wolflike creatures that guarded the herd by day when it grazed without the palisade, ten dogs to a cow. By night the cows were herded in an outer inclosure roofed against the onslaughts of the carnivorous cats; and the dogs, with the exception of a few, were brought into the village; these few well-tested brutes remained with the herd. During the day they fed plentifully upon the beasts of prey which they killed in protection of the herd, so that their keep amounted to nothing at all.

Shortly after the commotion at the gate had subsided, Ajor and I arose to enter the hut, and at the same time a warrior appeared from one of the twisted alleys which, lying between the irregularly placed huts and groups of huts, form the streets of the Kro-lu village. The fellow halted before us and addressed me, saying that Al-tan desired my presence at his hut. The wording of the invitation and the manner of the messenger threw me entirely off my guard, so cordial was the one and respectful the other, and the result was that I went willingly, telling Ajor that I would return presently. I had laid my arms and ammunition aside as soon as we had taken over the hut, and I left them with Ajor now, as I had noticed that aside from their hunting-knives the men of Kro-lu bore no weapons about the village streets. There was an atmosphere of peace and security within that village that I had not hoped to experience within Caspak, and after what I had passed through, it must have cast a numbing spell over my faculties of judgment and reason. I had eaten of the lotus-flower of safety; dangers no longer threatened for they had ceased to be.

The messenger led me through the labyrinthine alleys to an open plaza near the center of the village. At one end of this plaza was a long hut, much the largest that I had yet seen, before the door of which were many warriors. I could see that the interior was lighted and that a great number of men were gathered within. The dogs about the plaza were as thick as fleas, and those I approached closely evinced a strong desire to devour me, their noses evidently apprising them of the fact that I was of an alien race, since they paid no attention whatever to my companion. Once inside the council-hut, for such it appeared to be, I found a large concourse of warriors seated, or rather squatted, around the floor. At one end of the oval space which the warriors left down the center of the room stood Al-tan and another warrior whom I immediately recognized as a Galu, and then I saw that there were many Galus present. About the walls were a number of flaming torches stuck in holes in a clay plaster which evidently served the purpose of preventing the inflammable wood and grasses of which the hut was composed from being ignited by the flames. Lying about among the warriors or wandering restlessly to and fro were a number of savage dogs.

The warriors eyed me curiously as I entered, especially the Galus, and then I was conducted into the center of the group and led forward toward Al-tan. As I advanced, I felt one of the dogs sniffing at my heels, and of a sudden a great brute leaped upon my back. As I turned to thrust it aside before its fangs found a hold upon me, I beheld a huge Airedale leaping frantically about me. The grinning jaws, the half-closed eyes, the back-laid ears spoke to me louder than might the words of man that here was no savage enemy but a joyous friend, and then I recognized him, and fell to one knee and put my arms about his neck while he whined and cried with joy. It was Nobs, dear old Nobs, Bowen Tyler's Nobs, who had loved me next to his master.

"Where is the master of this dog?" I asked, turning toward Al-tan.

The chieftain inclined his head toward the Galu standing at his side. "He belongs to Du-seen the Galu," he replied.

"He belongs to Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., of Santa Monica," I retorted, "and I want to know where his master is."

The Galu shrugged. "The dog is mine," he said. "He came to me *cor-sva-jo*, and he is unlike any dog in Caspak, being kind and docile and yet a killer when aroused. I would not part with him. I do not know the man of whom you speak."

So this was Du-seen! This was the man from whom Ajor had fled. I wondered if he knew that she was here. I wondered if they had sent for me because of her; but after they had commenced to question me, my mind was relieved; they did not mention Ajor. Their interest seemed centered upon the strange world from which I had come, my journey to Caspak and my intentions now that I had arrived. I answered them frankly as I had nothing to conceal and assured them that my only wish was to find my friends and return to my own country. In the Galu Du-seen and his warriors I saw something of the explanation of the term "golden race" which is applied to them, for their ornaments and weapons were either wholly of beaten gold or heavily decorated with the precious metal. They were a very imposing set of men—tall and straight and handsome. About their heads were bands of gold like that which Ajor wore, and from their left shoulders depended the leopard-tails of the Galus. In addition to the deer-skin tunic which constituted the major portion of their apparel, each carried a light blanket of barbaric yet beautiful design—the first evidence of weaving I had seen in Caspak. Ajor had had no blanket, having lost it during her flight from the attentions of Du-seen; nor was she so heavily incrusted with gold as these male members of her tribe.

The audience must have lasted fully an hour when Al-tan signified that I might return to my hut. All the time Nobs had lain quietly at my feet; but the instant that I turned to leave, he was up and after me. Du-seen called to him; but the terrier never even so much as looked in his direction. I had almost reached the doorway leading from the council-hall when Al-tan rose and called after me. "Stop!" he shouted. "Stop, stranger! The beast of Du-seen the Galu follows you."

"The dog is not Du-seen's," I replied. "He belongs to my friends, as I told you, and he prefers to stay with me until his master is found." And I turned again to resume my way. I had taken but a few steps when I heard a commotion behind me, and at the same moment a man leaned close and whispered *"Kazar!"* close to my ear—*kazar*, the Caspakian equivalent of *beware*. It was To-mar. As he spoke, he turned quickly away as though loath to have others see that he knew me, and at the same instant I wheeled to discover Du-seen striding rapidly after me. Al-tan followed him, and it was evident that both were angry.

Du-seen, a weapon half drawn, approached truculently. "The beast is mine," he reiterated. "Would you steal him?"

"He is not yours nor mine," I replied, "and I am not stealing him. If he wishes to follow you, he may; I will not interfere; but if he wishes to follow me, he shall; nor shall you prevent." I turned to Al-tan. "Is not that fair?" I demanded. "Let the dog choose his master."

Nobs to the Rescue

DU-SEEN, without waiting for Al-tan's reply, reached for Nobs and grasped him by the scruff of the neck. I did not interfere, for I guessed what would happen; and it did. With a savage growl Nobs turned like lightning upon the Galu, wrenched loose from his hold and leaped for his throat. The man stepped back and warded off the first attack with a heavy blow of his fist, immediately drawing his knife with which to meet the Airedale's return. And Nobs would have returned, all right, had I not spoken to him. In a low voice I called him to heel. For just an instant he hesitated, standing there trembling and with bared fangs, glaring at his foe; but he was well trained and had been out with me quite as much as he had with Bowen—in fact, I had had most to do with his early training; then he walked slowly and very stiff-legged to his place behind me.

Du-seen, red with rage, would have had it out with the two of us had not Al-tan drawn him to one side and whispered in his ear—upon which, with a grunt, the Galu walked straight back to the opposite end of the hall, while Nobs and I continued upon our way toward the hut and Ajor. As we passed out into the village plaza, I saw Chal-az—we were so close to one another that I could have reached out and touched him—and our eyes met; but though I greeted him pleasantly and paused to speak to him, he brushed past me without a sign of recognition. I was puzzled at his behavior, and then I recalled that To-mar, though he had warned me, had appeared not to wish to seem friendly with me. I could not understand their attitude, and was trying to puzzle out some sort of explanation, when the matter was suddenly driven from my mind by the report of a firearm. Instantly I broke into a run, my brain in a whirl of forebodings, for the only firearms in the Kro-lu country were those I had left in the hut with Ajor.

That she was in danger I could not but fear, as she was now something of an adept in the handling of both the pistol and rifle, a fact which largely eliminated the chance that the shot had come from an accidentally discharged firearm. When I left the hut, I had felt that she and I were safe among friends; no thought of danger was in my mind; but since my audience with Al-tan, the presence and bearing of Du-seen and the strange attitude of both To-mar and Chal-az had each contributed toward arousing my suspicions, and now I ran along the narrow, winding alleys of the Kro-lu village with my heart fairly in my mouth.

I am endowed with an excellent sense of direction, which has been greatly perfected by the years I have spent in the mountains and upon the plains and deserts of my native state, so that it was with little or no difficulty that I found my way back to the hut in which I had left Ajor. As I entered the doorway, I called her name aloud. There was no response. I drew a box of matches from my pocket and struck a light, and as the flame flared up, a half-dozen brawny warriors leaped upon me from as many directions; but even in the brief instant that the flare lasted, I saw that Ajor was not within the hut, and that my arms and ammunition had been removed.

As the six men leaped upon me, an angry growl burst from behind them. I had forgotten Nobs. Like a demon of hate he sprang among those Kro-lu fighting men, tearing, rending, ripping with his long tusks and his mighty jaws. They had me down in an instant, and it goes without saying that the six of them could have kept me there had it not been for Nobs; but while I was struggling to throw them off, Nobs was springing first upon one and then upon another of them until they were so put to it to preserve their hides and their lives from him that they could give me only a small part of their attention. One of them was assiduously attempting to strike me on the head with his stone hatchet; but I caught his arm and at the same time turned over upon my belly, after which it took but an instant to get my feet under me and rise suddenly.

As I did so, I kept a grip upon the man's arm, carrying it over one shoulder. Then I leaned suddenly forward and hurled my antagonist over my head to a nasty fall at the opposite side of the hut. In the dim light of the interior I saw that Nobs had already accounted for one of the others—one who lay very quiet upon the floor—while the four remaining upon their feet were striking at him with knives and hatchets.

Running to the side of the man I had just put out of the fighting, I seized his hatchet and knife, and in another moment was in the thick of the argument. I was no match for these savage warriors with their own weapons and would soon have gone down to ignominious defeat and death had it not been for Nobs, who alone was a match for the four of them. I never saw any creature so quick upon its feet as was that great Airedale, nor such frightful ferocity as he manifested in his attacks. It was as much the latter as the former which contributed to the undoing of our enemies, who, accustomed though they were to the ferocity of terrible creatures, seemed awed by the sight of this strange beast from another world battling at the side of his equally strange master. Yet they were no cowards, and only by teamwork did Nobs and I overcome them at last. We would rush for a man, simultaneously and as Nobs leaped for him upon one side, I would strike at his head with the stone hatchet from the other.

As the last man went down, I heard the running of many feet approaching us from the direction of the plaza. To be captured now would mean death; yet I could not attempt to leave the village without first ascertaining the whereabouts of Ajor and releasing her if she were held a captive. That I could escape the village I was not at all sure; but of one thing I was positive; that it would do neither Ajor nor myself any service to remain where I was and be captured; so with Nobs, bloody and happy, following at heel, I turned down the first alley and slunk away in the direction of the northern end of the village.

Friendless and alone, hunted through the dark labyrinths of this savage community, I seldom have felt more helpless than at that moment; yet far transcending any fear which I may have felt for my own safety was my concern for that of Ajor. What fate had befallen her? Where was she, and in whose power? That I should live to learn the answers to these queries I doubted; but that I should face death gladly in the attempt—of that I was certain. And why? With all my concern for the welfare of my friends who had accompanied me to Caprona, and of my best friend of all, Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., I never yet had experienced the almost paralyzing fear for the safety of any other creature which now threw me alternately into a fever of despair and into a cold sweat of apprehension as my mind dwelt upon the fate of one bit of half-savage femininity of whose very existence I had not even dreamed a few short weeks before.

What was this hold she had upon me? Was I bewitched, that my mind refused to function sanely, and that judgment and reason were dethroned by some mad sentiment which I steadfastly refused to believe was love? I had never been in love. I was not in love now—the very thought was preposterous. How could I, Thomas Billings, the right-hand man of the late Bowen J. Tyler, Sr., one of America's foremost captains of industry and the greatest man in California, be in love with a—a—the word stuck in my throat; yet by my own American standards Ajor could be nothing else; at home, for all her beauty, for all her delicately tinted skin, little Ajor by her apparel, by the habits and customs and manners of her people, by her life, would have been classed as a *squaw*. Tom Billings in love with a squaw! I shuddered at the thought.

And then there came to my mind, in a sudden, brilliant flash upon the screen of recollection the picture of Ajor as I had last seen her, and I lived again the delicious moment in which we had clung to one another, lips smothering lips, as I left her to go to the council hall of Al-tan; and I could have kicked myself for the snob and the cad that my thoughts had proven me—me, who had always prided myself that I was neither the one nor the other!

These things ran through my mind as Nobs and I made our way through the dark village, the voices and footsteps of those who sought us still in our ears. These and many other things. I could not escape the incontrovertible fact that the little figure round which my recollections and my hopes entwined themselves was that of Ajor—beloved barbarian! My reveries were broken in upon by a hoarse whisper from the black interior of a hut past which we were making our way. My name was called in a low voice, and a man stepped out beside me as I halted with raised knife. It was Chal-az.

"Quick!" he warned. "In here! It is my hut, and they will not search it."

I hesitated, recalling his attitude of a few minutes before; and as though he had read my thoughts, he said quickly: "I could not speak to you in the plaza without danger of arousing suspicions which would prevent me aiding you later, for word had gone out that Al-tan had turned against you and would destroy you—this was after Du-seen the Galu arrived."

Ajor, the Beautiful Caspakian, Safe

I FOLLOWED him into the hut, and with Nobs at our heels we passed through several chambers into a remote and windowless apartment where a small lamp sputtered in its unequal battle with the inky darkness. A hole in the roof permitted the smoke from the burning oil egress; yet the atmosphere was far from lucid. Here Chal-az motioned me to a seat upon a furry hide spread upon the earthen floor.

"I am your friend," he said. "You saved my life; and I am no ingrate as is the *batu* Al-tan. I will serve you, and there are others here who will serve you against Al-tan and this renegade Galu, Du-seen."

"But where is Ajor?" I asked, for I cared little for my own safety while she was in danger.

"Ajor is safe, too," he answered. "We learned the designs of Al-tan and Du-seen. The latter, learning that Ajor was here, demanded her; and Al-tan promised that he should have her; but when the warriors went to get her, To-mar went with them. Ajor tried to defend herself. She killed one of the warriors, and then To-mar picked her up in his arms when the others had taken her weapons from her. He told the others to look after the wounded man, who was really already dead, and to seize you upon your return, and that he, To-mar, would bear Ajor to Al-tan; but instead of bearing her to Al-tan, he took her to his own hut, where she now is with So-al, To-mar's she. It all happened very quickly. To-mar and I were in the council-hut when Du-seen attempted to take the dog from you. I was seeking To-mar for this work. He ran out immediately and accompanied the warriors to your hut while I remained to watch what went on within the council-hut and to aid you if you needed aid. What has happened since you know."

I thanked him for his loyalty and then asked him to take me to Ajor; but he said that it could not be done, as the village streets were filled with searchers. In fact, we could hear them passing to and fro among the huts, making inquiries, and at last Chal-az thought it best to go to the doorway of his dwelling, which consisted of many huts joined together, lest they enter and search.

Chal-az was absent for a long time—several hours which seemed an eternity to me. All sounds of pursuit had long since ceased, and I was becoming uneasy because of his protracted absence when I heard him returning through the other apartments of his dwelling. He was perturbed when he entered that in which I awaited him, and I saw a worried expression upon his face.

"What is wrong?" I asked. "Have they found Ajor?"

"No," he replied; "but Ajor has gone. She learned that you had escaped them and was told that you had left the village; believing that she had escaped too. So-al could not detain her. She made her way out over the top of the palisade, armed only with her knife."

"Then I must go," I said, rising. Nobs rose and shook himself. He had been dead alseep when I spoke.

"Yes," agreed Chal-az, "you must go at once. It is almost dawn. Du-seen leaves at daylight to search for her." He leaned close to my ear and whispered: "There are many to follow and help you. Al-tan has agreed to aid Du-seen against the Galus of Jor; but there are many of us who have combined to rise against Al-tan and prevent this ruthless desecration of the laws and customs of the Kro-lu and of Caspak. We will rise as Luata has ordained that we shall rise, and only thus. No *batu* may win the estate of a Galu by treachery and force of arms while Chal-az lives and can wield a heavy bow and a sharp spear with true Kro-lus at his back!"

"I hope that I may live to aid you," I replied. "If I had my weapons and my ammunition, I could do much. Do you know where they are?"

"No," he said, "they have disappeared." And then: "Wait! You cannot go forth half armed, and garbed as you are. You are going into the Galu country, and you must go as a Galu. Come!" And without waiting for a reply, he led me into another apartment, or to be more explicit, another of the several huts which formed his cellular dwelling.

Here was a pile of skins, weapons and ornaments. "Remove your strange apparel," said Chal-az, "and I will fit you out as a true Galu. I have slain several of them in the raids of my early days as a Kro-lu, and here are their trappings."

Dressing and Arming in Caspakian Style

I SAW the wisdom of his suggestion, and as my clothes were by now so ragged as to but half conceal my nakedness, I had no regrets in laying them aside. Stripped to the skin, I donned the red-deer-skin tunic, the leopard-tail, the golden fillet, armlets and leg-ornaments of a Galu, with the belt, scabbard and knife, the shield, spear, bow and arrow and the long rope which I learned now for the first time is the distinctive weapon of the Galu warrior. It is a rawhide rope, not dissimilar to those of the Western plains and cow-camps of my youth. The *honda* is a golden oval about which is braided the rawhide, making a heavy and accurate weight for the throwing of the noose. This heavy *honda*, Chal-az explained, is used as a weapon, being thrown with great force and accuracy at an enemy and then coiled in for another cast. In hunting and in battle, they use both the noose and the *honda*. If several warriors surround a single foeman or quarry, they rope it with the noose from several sides; but a single warrior against a lone antagonist will attempt to brain his foe with the metal oval.

I could not have been more pleased with any weapon, short of a rifle, which he could have found for me, since I have been adept with the rope from early childhood; but I must confess that I was less favorably inclined toward my apparel. In so far as the sensation was concerned, I might as well have been entirely naked, so short and light was the tunic. When I asked *Chal-az* for the Caspakian name for rope, he told me *ga*, and for the first time I understood the derivation of the word *Galu*, which means ropeman.

Entirely outfitted I would not have known myself, so strange was my garb and my armament. Upon my back were slung my bow, arrows, shield, and short spear; from the center of my girdle depended my knife; at my right hip was my stone hatchet; and at my left hung the coils of my long rope. By reaching my right hand over my left shoulder, I could seize the spear or arrows; my left hand could find my bow over my right shoulder, while a veritable contortionist-act was necessary to place my shield in front of me and upon my left arm. The shield, long and oval, is utilized more as back-armor than as a defense against frontal attack, for the close-set armlets of gold upon the left fore-arm are principally depended upon to ward off knife, spear, hatchet, or arrow from in front; but against the greater carnivora and the attacks of several human antagonists, the shield is utilized to its best advantage and carried by loops upon the left arm.

Fully equipped, except for a blanket, I followed Chal-az from his domicile into the dark and deserted alleys of Kro-lu. Silently we crept along, Nobs silent at heel, toward the nearest portion of the palisade. Here Chal-az bade me farewell, telling me that he hoped to see me soon among the Galus, as he felt that "the call soon would come" to him. I thanked him for his loyal assistance and promised that whether I reached the Galu country or not, I should always stand ready to repay his kindness to me, and that he could count on me in the revolution against Al-tan.

CHAPTER VII

TO RUN up the inclined surface of the palisade and drop to the ground outside was the work of but a moment, or would have been but for Nobs. I had to put my rope about him after we reached the top, lift him over the sharpened stakes and lower him upon the outside. To find Ajor in the unknown country to the north seemed rather hopeless; yet I could do no less than try, praying in the meanwhile that she would come through unscathed and in safety to her father.

As Nobs and I swung along in the growing light of the coming day, I was impressed by the lessening numbers of savage beasts the farther north I traveled. With the decrease among the carnivora, the herbivora increased in quantity, though anywhere in Caspak they are sufficiently plentiful to furnish ample food for the meat-eaters of each locality. The wild cattle, antelope, deer, and horses I passed showed changes in evolution from their cousins farther south. The kine were smaller and less shaggy, the horses larger. North of the Kro-lu village I saw a small band of the latter of about the size of those of our old Western plains—such as the Indians bred in former days and to a lesser extent even now. They were fat and sleek, and I looked upon them with covetous eyes and with thoughts that any old cow-puncher may well imagine I might entertain after having hoofed it for weeks; but they were wary, scarce permitting me to approach within bow-and-arrow range, much less within roping-distance; yet I still had hopes which I never discarded.

Twice before noon we were stalked and charged by man-eaters; but even though I was without firearms, I still had ample protection in Nobs, who evidently had learned something of Caspakian hunt rules under the tutorage of Du-seen or some other Galu, and of course a great deal more by experience. He always was on the alert for dangerous foes, invariably warning me by low growls of the approach of a large carnivorous animal long before I could either see or hear it, and then when the thing appeared, he would run snapping at his heels, drawing the charge away from me until I found safety in some tree; yet never did the wily Nobs take an unnecessary chance of mauling. He would dart in and away so quickly that not even the lightning-like movements of the great cats could reach him. I have seen him tantalize them thus until they fairly screamed in rage.

The greatest inconvenience the man-eaters caused was the delay, for they have a nasty habit of keeping one treed for an hour or more if balked in their designs; but at last we came in sight of a line of cliffs running east and west across our path as far as the eye could see in either direction, and I knew that we had reached the natural boundary which marks the line between the Kro-lu and Galu countries. The southern face of these cliffs loomed high and forbidding, rising to an altitude of some two hundred feet, sheer and precipitous, without a break that the eye could perceive. How I was to find a crossing I could not guess. Whether to search to the east toward the still loftier barrier-cliffs fronting upon the ocean, or westward in the direction of the inland sea was a question which baffled me. Were there many passes or only one? I had no way of knowing. I could but trust to chance. It never occurred to me that Nobs had made the crossing at least once, possibly a greater number of times, and that he might lead me to the pass; and so it was with no idea of assistance that I appealed to him as a man alone with a dumb brute so often does.

"Nobs," I said, "how the devil are we going to cross those cliffs?"

I do not say that he understood me, even though I realize that an Airedale is a mighty intelligent dog; but I do swear that he seemed to understand me, for he wheeled about, barking joyously, and trotted off toward the west; and when I didn't follow him, he ran back to me, barking furiously, and at last taking hold of the calf of my leg in an effort to pull me along in the direction he wished me to go. Now, as my legs were naked and Nobs' jaws are much more powerful than he realizes, I gave in and followed him, for I knew that I might as well go west as east, as far as any knowledge I had of the correct direction went.

We followed the base of the cliffs for a considerable distance. The ground was rolling and tree-dotted and covered with grazing animals, alone, in pairs and in herds—a motley aggregation of the modern and extinct herbivora of the world. A huge woolly mastodon stood swaying to and fro in the shade of a giant fern—a mighty bull with enormous upcurving tusks. Near him grazed an aurochs bull with a cow and calf, close beside a lone rhinoceros asleep in a dust-hole. Deer, antelope, bison, horses, sheep, and goats were all in sight at the same time, and at a little distance a giant megatherium reared up on its huge tail and massive hind feet to tear the leaves from a tall tree. The forgotten past rubbed flanks with the present—while Tom Billings, modern of the moderns, passed in the garb of a pre-Glacial man, and before him trotted a creature of a breed scarce sixty years old. Nobs was a parvenu; but it failed to worry him.

As we neared the inland sea we saw more flying reptiles and several great amphibians, but none of them attacked us. In the middle of the afternoon as we were topping a rise, I saw something that brought me to a sudden stop. Calling Nobs in a whisper, I cautioned him to silence and kept him at heel while I threw myself flat and watched, from behind a sheltering shrub, a body of warriors approaching the cliff from the south. I could see that they were Galus, and I guessed that Du-seen led them. They had taken a shorter route to the pass and so had overhauled me. I could see them plainly, for they were no great distance away, and I saw with relief that Ajor was not with them.

The cliffs before them were broken and ragged, those coming from the east overlapping the cliffs from the west. Into the defile formed by this overlapping the party filed. I could see them climbing upward for a few minutes, and then they disappeared from view. When the last of them had passed from sight, I rose and bent my steps in the direction of the pass—the same pass toward which Nobs had evidently been leading me. I went warily as I approached it, for fear the party might have halted to rest. If they hadn't halted, I had no fear of being discovered, for I had seen that the Galus marched without point, flankers or rear guard; and when I reached the pass and saw a narrow one-man trail leading upward at a stiff angle, I wished that I were chief of the Galus for a few weeks. A dozen men could hold off forever in that narrow pass all the hordes which might be brought up from the south; yet there it lay entirely unguarded.

The Galus might be a great people in Caspak; but they were pitifully inefficient in even the simpler forms of military tactics. I was surprised that even a man of the Stone Age should be so lacking in military perspicacity. Du-seen dropped far below par in my estimation as I saw the slovenly formation of his troop as it passed through an enemy country and entered the domain of the chief against whom he had risen in revolt; but Du-seen must have known Jor the chief and known that Jor would not be waiting for him at the pass. Nevertheless he took unwarranted chances. With one squad of home-guard company I could have conquered Caspak.

Nobs and I followed to the summit of the pass, and there we saw the party defiling into the Galu country, the level of which was not, on an average, over fifty feet below the summit of the cliffs and about a hundred and fifty feet above the adjacent Kro-lu domain. Immediately the landscape changed.

The trees, the flowers and the shrubs were of a hardier type, and I realized that at night the Galu blanket might be almost a necessity. Acacia and eucalyptus predominated among the trees; yet there were ash and oak and even pine and fir and hemlock. The tree-life was riotous. The forests were dense and filled with enormous trees. From the summit of the cliff I could see forests rising hundreds of feet above the level upon which I stood, and even at the distance they were from me I realized that the boles were of gigantic size.

A Good Bow-shot

AT last I had come to the Galu country. Though not conceived in Caspak, I had indeed come up *cor-sva-jo*—from the beginning I had come up through the hideous horrors of the lower Caspakian spheres of evolution, and I could not but feel something of the elation and pride which had filled To-mar and So-al when they realized that the call had come to them and they were about to rise from the estate of Band-lus to that of Kro-lus. I was glad that I was not *batu*.

But where was Ajor? Though my eyes searched the wide landscape before me, I saw nothing other than warriors of Du-seen and the beasts of the fields and the forests. Surrounded by forests, I could see wide plains dotting the country as far as the eye could reach; but nowhere was a sign of a small Galu she—the beloved she whom I would have given my right hand to see.

Nobs and I were hungry; we had not eaten since the preceding night, and below us was game—deer, sheep, anything that a hungry hunter might crave; so down the steep trail we made our way, and then upon my belly with Nobs crouching low behind me, I crawled toward a small herd of red deer feeding at the edge of a plain close beside a forest. There was ample cover, what with solitary trees and dotting bushes, so that I found no difficulty in stalking up wind to within fifty feet of my quarry—a large, sleek doe unaccompanied by a fawn. Greatly then did I regret my rifle. Never in my life had I shot an arrow; but I knew how it was done, and fitting the shaft to my string, I aimed carefully and let drive. At the same instant I called to Nobs and leaped to my feet.

The arrow caught the doe full in the side, and in the same moment Nobs was after her. She turned to flee with the two of us pursuing her, Nobs with his great fangs bared and I with my short spear poised for a cast. The balance of the herd sprang quickly away; but the hurt doe lagged, and in a moment Nobs was beside her and had leaped at her throat. He had her down when I came up, and I finished her with my spear. It didn't take me long to have a fire going and a steak broiling, and while I was preparing for my own feast, Nobs was filling himself with raw venison. Never have I enjoyed a meal so heartily.

For two days I searched fruitlessly back and forth from the inland sea almost to the barrier cliffs for some trace of Ajor, and always I trended northward; but I saw no sign of any human being, not even the band of Galu warriors under Du-seen; and then I commenced to have misgivings. Had Chal-az spoken the truth to me when he said that Ajor had quit the village of the Kro-lu? Might he not have been acting upon the orders of Al-tan, in whose savage bosom might have lurked some small spark of shame that he had attempted to do to death one who had befriended a Kro-lu warrior—a guest who had brought no harm upon the Kro-lu race—and thus have sent me out upon a fruitless mission in the hope that the wild beasts would do what Al-tan hesitated to do? I did not know; but the more I thought upon it, the more convinced I became that Ajor had not quitted the Kro-lu village; but if not, what had brought Du-seen forth without her? There was a puzzler, and once again I was all at sea.

On the second day of my experiences of the Galu country I came upon a bunch of as magnificent horses as it has ever been my lot to see. They were dark bays with blazed faces and perfect surcingles of white about their barrels. Their forelegs were white to the knees. In height they stood almost sixteen hands, the mares being a trifle smaller than the stallions, of which there were three or four in this band of a hundred, which comprised many colts and half-grown horses. Their markings were almost identical, indicating a purity of strain that might have persisted since long ages ago. If I had coveted one of the little ponies of the Kro-lu country, imagine my state of mind when I came upon these magnificent creatures! No sooner had I espied them than I determined to possess one of them; nor did it take me long to select a beautiful young stallion—a four-year-old, I guessed him.

The Lasso and the Horses

THE horses were grazing close to the edge of the forest in which Nobs and I were concealed, while the ground between us and them was dotted with clumps of flowering brush which offered perfect concealment. The stallion of my choice grazed with a filly and two yearlings a little apart from the balance of the herd and nearest to the forest and to me. At my whispered "Charge!" Nobs flattened himself to the ground, and I knew that he would not again move until I called him, unless danger threatened me from the rear. Carefully I crept forward toward my unsuspecting quarry, coming undetected to the concealment of a bush not more than twenty feet from him. Here I quietly arranged my noose, spreading it flat and open upon the ground.

To step to one side of the bush and throw directly from the ground, which is the style I am best in, would take but an instant, and in that instant the stallion would doubtless be under way at top speed in the opposite direction. Yet I felt that I could accomplish it, and especially so if the animal would but turn for a moment in my direction. Then he would have to wheel about when I surprised him, and in doing so, he would most certainly rise slightly upon his hind feet and throw up his head, presenting a perfect target for my noose as he pivoted.

Yes, I had it beautifully worked out, and I waited until he should turn in my direction. At last it became evident that he was doing so, when apparently without cause, the filly raised her head, neighed and started off at a trot in the opposite direction, immediately followed, of course, by the colts and my stallion. It looked for a moment as though my last hope was blasted; but presently their fright, if fright it was, passed, and they resumed grazing again a hundred yards farther on. This time there was no bush within fifty feet of them, and I was at a loss as to how to get within safe roping-distance. Anywhere under forty feet I am an excellent roper, at fifty feet I am fair; but over that I knew it would be but a matter of luck if I succeeded in getting my noose about that beautiful arched neck.

As I stood debating the question in my mind, I was almost upon the point of making the attempt at the long throw. I had plenty of rope, this Galu weapon being fully sixty feet long. How I wished for the collies from the ranch! At a word they would have circled this little bunch and driven it straight down to me; and then it flashed into my mind that Nobs had run with those collies all one summer, that he had gone down to the pasture with them after the cows every evening and done his part in driving them back to the milking-barn, and had done it intelligently; but Nobs had never done the thing alone, and it had been a year since he had done it at all. However, the chances were more in favor of my foozling the long throw than that Nobs would fall down in his part if I gave him the chance.

Having come to a decision, I had to creep back to Nobs and get him, and then with him at my heels return to a large bush near the four horses. Here we could see directly through the bush, and pointing the animals out to Nobs I whispered: "Fetch 'em, boy!"

In an instant he was gone, circling wide toward the rear of the quarry. They caught sight of him almost immediately and broke into a trot away from him; but when they saw that he was apparently giving them a wide berth they stopped again, though they stood watching him, with high-held heads and quivering nostrils. It was a beautiful sight. And then Nobs turned in behind them and trotted slowly back toward me. He did not bark, or come rushing down upon them, and then when he had come closer to them, he proceeded at a walk. The splendid creatures seemed more curious than fearful, making no effort to escape until Nobs was quite close to them; then they trotted slowly away, at right angles.

Nobs Driving the Horses to Capture

AND now the fun and trouble commenced. Nobs, of course, attempted to turn them, and he seemed to have selected the stallion to work upon, for he paid no attention to the others, having intelligence enough to know that a lone dog could run his legs off before he could round up four horses that didn't wish to be rounded up. The stallion, however, had notions of his own about being headed, and the result was as pretty a race as one would care to see. Gad, how that horse could run! He seemed to flatten out and shoot through the air with the very minimum of exertion, and at his forefoot ran Nobs, doing his best to turn him. He was barking now, and twice he leaped high against the stallion's flank; but this cost too much effort and always lost him ground, as each time he was hurled heels over head by the impact; yet before they disappeared over a rise in the ground I was sure that Nobs' persistence was bearing fruit; it seemed to me that the horse was giving way a trifle to the right. Nobs was between him and the main herd, to which the yearling and filly had already fled.

As I stood waiting for Nobs' return, I could not but speculate upon my chances should I be attacked by some formidable beast. I was some distance from the forest and armed with weapons in the use of which I was quite untrained, though I had practiced some with the spear since leaving the Kro-lu country. I must admit that my thoughts were not pleasant ones, verging almost upon cowardice, until I chanced to think of little Ajor alone in this same land and armed only with a knife! I was immediately filled with shame; but in thinking the matter over since, I have come to the conclusion that my state of mind was influenced largely by my approximate nakedness. If you have never wandered about in broad daylight garbed in a bit of red-deer skin of inadequate length, you can have no conception of the sensation of futility that overwhelms one. Clothes, to a man accustomed to wearing clothes, impart a certain self-confidence; lack of them induces panic.

But no beast attacked me, though I saw several menacing forms passing through the dark aisles of the forest. At last I commenced to worry over Nobs' protracted absence and to fear that something had befallen him. I was coiling my rope to start out in search of him, when I saw the stallion leap into view at almost the same spot behind which he had disappeared, and at his heels ran Nobs. Neither was running so fast or furiously as when last I had seen them.

The horse, as he approached me, I could see was laboring hard; yet he kept gamely to his task, and Nobs, too. The splendid fellow was driving the quarry straight toward me. I crouched behind my bush and laid my noose in readiness to throw. As the two approached my hiding-place, Nobs reduced his speed, and the stallion, evidently only too glad of the respite, dropped into a trot. It was at this gait that he passed me; my rope-hand flew forward; the *honda*, well down, held the noose open, and the beautiful bay fairly ran his head into it.

Instantly he wheeled to dash off at right angles. I braced myself with the rope around my hip and brought him to a sudden stand. Rearing and struggling, he fought for his liberty while Nobs, panting and with lolling tongue, came and threw himself down near me. He seemed to know that his work was done and that he had earned his rest. The stallion was pretty well spent, and after a few minutes of struggling he stood with feet far spread, nostrils dilated and eyes wide, watching me as I edged slowly toward him, taking in the slack of the rope as I advanced. A dozen times he reared and tried to break away; but always I spoke soothingly to him, and after an hour of effort I succeeded in reaching his head and stroking his muzzle. Then I gathered a handful of grass and offered it to him, and always I talked to him in a quiet and reassuring voice.

I had expected a battle royal; but on the contrary I found his taming a matter of comparative ease. Though wild, he was gentle to a degree, and of such remarkable intelligence that he soon discovered that I had no intention of harming him. After that, all was easy. Before that day was done, I had taught him to lead and to stand while I stroked his head and flanks, and to eat from my hand, and had the satisfaction of seeing the light of fear die in his large, intelligent eyes.

The following day I fashioned a hackamore from a piece which I cut from the end of my long Galu rope, and then I mounted him fully prepared for a struggle of titanic proportions in which I was none too sure that he would not come off victor; but he never made the slightest effort to unseat me, and from then on his education was rapid. No horse ever learned more quickly the meaning of the rein and the pressure of the knees. I think he soon learned to love me, and I know that I loved him; while he and Nobs were the best of pals. I called him Ace. I had a friend who was once in the French flying-corps, and when Ace let himself out, he certainly flew.

I cannot explain to you, nor can you understand, unless you too are a horseman, the exhilarating feeling of well-being which pervaded me from the moment that I commenced riding Ace. I was a new man, imbued with a sense of superiority that led me to feel that I could go forth and conquer all Caspak single-handed. Now, when I needed meat, I ran it down on Ace and roped it, and when some great beast with which we could not cope threatened us, we galloped away to safety; but for the most part the creatures we met looked upon us in terror, for Ace and I in combination presented a new and unusual beast beyond their experience and ken.

For five days I rode back and forth across the southern end of the Galu country without seeing a human being; yet all the time I was working slowly toward the north, for I had determined to comb the territory thoroughly in search of Ajor; but on the fifth day as I emerged from a forest, I saw some distance ahead of me a single small figure pursued by many others. Instantly I recognized the quarry as Ajor. The entire party was fully a mile away from me, and they were crossing my path at right angles, Ajor a few hundred yards in advance of those who followed her. One of her pursuers was far in advance of the others, and was gaining upon her rapidly. With a word and a pressure of the knees I sent Ace leaping out into the open, and with Nobs running close alongside, we raced toward her.

At first none of them saw us, but as we neared Ajor, the pack behind the foremost pursuer discovered us and set up such a howl as I never before have heard. They were all Galus, and I soon recognized the foremost as Du-seen. He was almost upon Ajor now, and with a sense of terror such as I had never before experienced, I saw that he ran with his knife in his hand and that his intention was to slay rather than capture. I could not understand it; but I could only urge Ace to greater speed, and most nobly did the wondrous creature respond to my demands. If ever a four-footed creature approximated flying, it was Ace that day.

A Rescue In the Quagmire

DU-SEEN, intent upon his brutal design, had as yet not noticed us. He was within a pace of Ajor when Ace and I dashed between them, and I, leaning down to the left, swept my little barbarian into the hollow of an arm and up to the withers of my glorious Ace. We had snatched her from the very clutches of Du-seen, who halted, mystified and raging. Ajor, too, was mystified, as we had come up from diagonally behind her so that she had no idea that we were near until she was swung to Ace's back. The little savage turned with drawn knife to stab me, thinking that I was some new enemy, when her eyes found my face and she recognized me. With a little sob she threw her arms about my neck, gasping: "My Tom! My Tom!"

And then Ace sank suddenly into thick mud to his belly, and Ajor and I were thrown far over his head. He had run into one of those numerous springs which cover Caspak. Sometimes they are little lakes, again but tiny pools, and often mere quagmires of mud, as was this one overgrown with lush grasses which effectually hid its treacherous identity. It is a wonder that Ace did not break a leg, so fast he was going when he fell; but he didn't, though with four good legs he was unable to wallow from the mire. Ajor and I had sprawled face down into the covering grasses and so had not sunk deeply; but when we tried to rise, we found that there was no footing, and presently we saw that Du-seen and his followers were coming down upon us. There was no escape. It was evident that we were doomed.

"Slay me!" begged Ajor. "Let me die at thy loved hands rather than beneath the knife of this hateful thing, for he will kill me. He has sworn to kill me. Last night he captured me, and when later he would have had his way with me, I struck him with my fists and with my knife I stabbed him, and then I escaped, leaving him raging in pain and thwarted desire. To-day they searched for me and found me; and as I fled, Du-seen ran after me crying that he would slay me. Kill me, my Tom, and then fall upon thine own spear, for they will kill you horribly if they take you alive."

I couldn't kill her—not at least until the last moment; and I told her so, and that I loved her, and that until death came, I would live and fight for her.

Nobs had followed us into the bog and had done fairly well at first, but when he neared us, he too sank to his belly and could only flounder about. We were in this predicament when Du-seen and his followers approached the edge of the horrible swamp. I saw that Al-tan was with him and many other Kro-lu warriors. The alliance against Jor the chief had, therefore, been consummated, and this horde was already marching upon the Galu city. I sighed as I thought how close I had been to saving not only Ajor but her father and his people from defeat and death.

Beyond the swamp was a dense wood. Could we have reached this, we would have been safe; but it might as well have been a hundred miles away as a hundred yards across that hidden lake of sticky mud. Upon the edge of the swamp Du-seen and his horde halted to revile us. They could not reach us with their hands; but at a command from Du-seen they fitted arrows to their bows, and I saw that the end had come. Ajor huddled close to me, and I took her in my arms. "I love you, Tom," she said, "only you." Tears came to my eyes then, not tears of self-pity for my predicament, but tears from a heart filled with a great love—a heart that sees the sun of its life and its love setting even as it rises.

The renegade Galus and their Kro-lu allies stood waiting for the word from Du-seen that would launch that barbed avalanche of death upon us, when there broke from the wood beyond the swamp the sweetest music that ever fell upon the ears of man—the sharp staccato of at least two score rifles fired rapidly at will. Down went the Galu and Kro-lu warriors like tenpins before that deadly fusillade.

What could it mean? To me it meant but one thing, and that was that Hollis and Short and the others had scaled the cliffs and made their way north to the Galu country upon the opposite side of the island in time to save Ajor and me from almost certain death. I didn't have to have an introduction to them to know that the men who held those rifles were the men of my own party; and when, a few minutes later, they came forth from their concealment, my eyes verified my hopes. There they were, every man-jack of them; and with them were a thousand straight, sleek warriors of the Galu race; and ahead of the others came two men in the garb of Galus. Each was tall and straight and wonderfully muscled; yet they differed as Ace might differ from a perfect specimen of another species. As they approached the mire, Ajor held forth her arms and cried, "Jor, my chief! My father!" and the elder of the two rushed in knee-deep to rescue her, and then the other came closer and looked into my face, and his eyes went wide, and mine too, and I cried: "Bowen! For heaven's sake, Bowen Tyler!"

The Lost Is Found Climbing the Cliffs

IT was he. My search was ended. Around me were all my company and the man we had searched a new world to find. They cut saplings from the forest and laid a road into the swamp before they could get us all out, and then we marched back to the city of Jor the Galu chief, and there was great rejoicing when Ajor came home again mounted upon the glossy back of the stallion Ace.

Tyler and Hollis and Short and all the rest of us Americans nearly worked our jaws loose on the march back to the village, and for days afterward we kept it up. They told me how they had crossed the barrier cliffs in five days, working twenty-four hours a day in three eight-hour shifts with two reliefs to each shift alternating half-hourly. Two men with electric drills driven from the dynamos aboard the *Toreador* drilled two holes four feet apart in the face of the cliff and in the same horizontal plane. The holes slanted slightly downward. Into these holes the iron rods brought as a part of our equipment and for just this purpose were inserted, extending about a foot beyond the face of the rock, across these two rods a plank was laid, and then the next shift, mounting to the new level, bored two more holes five feet above the new platform, and so on.

During the nights the searchlights from the *Toreador* were kept playing upon the cliff at the point where the drills were working, and at the rate of ten feet an hour the summit was reached upon the fifth day. Ropes were lowered, blocks lashed to trees at the top, and crude elevators rigged, so that by the night of the fifth day the entire party, with the exception of the few men needed to man the *Toreador*, were within Caspak with an abundance of arms, ammunition and equipment.

From then on, they fought their way north in search of me, after a vain and perilous effort to enter the hideous reptile-infested country to the south. Owing to the number of guns among them, they had not lost a man; but their path was strewn with the dead creatures they had been forced to slay to win their way to the north end of the island, where they had found Bowen and his bride among the Galus of Jor.

The reunion between Bowen and Nobs was marked by a frantic display upon Nobs' part, which almost stripped Bowen of the scanty attire that the Galu custom had vouchsafed him. When we arrived at the Galu city, Lys La Rue was waiting to welcome us. She was Mrs. Tyler now, as the master of the *Toreador* had married them the very day that the search-party had found them, though neither Lys nor Bowen would admit that any civil or religious ceremony could have rendered more sacred the bonds with which God had united them.

Neither Bowen nor the party from the *Toreador* had seen any sign of Bradley and his party. They had been so long lost now that any hopes for them must be definitely abandoned. The Galus had heard rumors of them, as had the Western Kro-lu and Band-lu; but none had seen aught of them since they had left Fort Dinosaur months since.

We rested in Jor's village for a fortnight while we prepared for the southward journey to the point where the *Toreador* was to lie offshore in wait for us. During these two weeks Chal-az came up from the Kro-lu country, now a full-fledged Galu. He told us that the remnants of Al-tan's party had been slain when they attempted to reenter Kro-lu. Chal-az had been made chief, and when he rose, had left the tribe under a new leader whom all respected.

Nobs stuck close to Bowen; but Ace and Ajor and I went out upon many long rides through the beautiful north Galu country. Chal-az had brought my arms and ammunition up from Kro-lu with him; but my clothes were gone; nor did I miss them once I became accustomed to the free attire of the Galu.

At last came the time for our departure; upon the following morning we were to set out toward the south and the *Toreador* and dear old California. I had asked Ajor to go with us; but Jor her father had refused to listen to the suggestion. No pleas could swerve him from his decision: Ajor, the *cos-ata-lo*, from whom might spring a new and greater Caspakian race, could not be spared. I might have any other she among the Galus; but Ajor—no!

The poor child was heartbroken; and as for me, I was slowly realizing the hold that Ajor had upon my heart and wondering how I should get along without her. As I held her in my arms that last night, I tried to imagine what life would be without her, for at last there had come to me the realization that I loved her—loved my little barbarian; and as I finally tore myself away and went to my own hut to snatch a few hours' sleep before we set off upon our long journey on the morrow, I consoled myself with the thought that time would heal the wound and that back in my native land I should find a mate who would be all and more to me than little Ajor could ever be—a woman of my own race and my own culture.

Morning came more quickly than I could have wished. I rose and breakfasted, but saw nothing of Ajor. It was best, I thought, that I go thus without the harrowing pangs of a last farewell. The party formed for the march, an escort of Galu warriors ready to accompany us. I could not even bear to go to Ace's corral and bid him farewell. The night before, I had given him to Ajor, and now in my mind the two seemed quite inseparable.

And so we marched away, down along the street flanked with its stone houses and out through the wide gateway in the stone wall which surrounds the city and on across the clearing toward the forest through which we must pass to reach the northern boundary of Galu, beyond which we would turn south. At the edge of the forest I cast a last backward glance at the city which held my heart, and beside the massive gateway I saw that which brought me to a sudden halt. It was a little figure leaning against one of the great upright posts upon which the gates swing—a crumpled little figure; and even at this distance I could see its shoulders heave to the sobs that racked it. It was the last straw.

Bowen was near me. "Good-bye, old man," I said. "I'm going back."

He looked at me in surprise. "Good-bye, old man," he said, and grasped my hand. "I thought you'd do it in the end."

And then I went back and took Ajor in my arms and kissed the tears from her eyes and a smile to her lips while together we watched the last of the Americans disappear into the forest.

(*To be concluded*)

Discussions

In this department we shall discuss, every month, topics of interest to all of our readers. The editors invite correspondence on all subjects directly or indirectly related to the stories appearing in this magazine. Only letters of interest to all of our readers will be published, and discussed by the editors. Due to the great influx of mail it is impossible to answer all letters personally, and in case a special personal answer is required, a nominal fee of 25c to cover time and postage is required.

Critics Criticized

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I have read the January issue of AMAZING STORIES, and certainly enjoyed all the stories, as I did in all the previous issues.

I couldn't resist writing you on the attitude of some of your readers who criticize your methods.

An editor certainly has some job, with the "gimme this," and "gimme that." It's a wonder the magazines don't go to ruin, and the publishers to an asylum.

Now if a correspondent would only consider the other readers as he does himself he could not find fault with your magazine, but *no*, only he himself enjoys reading to his ideal.

If a reader doesn't like a story why shouldn't he pass it over, and read the next one. The one he almost hates brings joy and an idea to someone else. As an example we may take "The Moon Hoax," if he stopped to realize that the public will pick up everything but "scientific truth," he would see that the "Moon Hoax," truly believed by many, showed the psychology of the many.

Some do not like funny stories. Well as for me, I like a mixture, comic, sober, exciting, spiritualistic, mysterious, gruesome; and your magazine, the one great magazine of scientific literature, has satisfied all these desires.

Fosdick's electroplating story hit me so hard that I immediately coated rats with graphite and plated them with copper, and also insects were coated in the same manner.

Dr. Ox's experiment also hit me hard. I have been constructing a small yard which will be almost airtight, and small animals and insects will be experimented on. These two stories are comic, yet I found an idea in each.

"Station X" I certainly think is a wonderful masterpiece, and I put 15 dollars in a low wave transmitter so I could have a friend of mine, who is a physician and pretty good hypnotist, hypnotize a subject, the experiment failed this once, but I'm going to try again.

If a person would follow the *"Science and Invention"* motto, "If you do not go beyond fact you rarely get as far as fact," and stop to consider his fellow readers, he would find no fault with your magazine. Am I right?

There were only two stories I really didn't enjoy in the magazine since the first issue, but I soon found out that they were much admired in some circles. Now if I put up my personal objection, how could you please me and them? If I don't like a story I let it pass to the next reader, and I certainly wish the others felt the same.

I can truthfully say that there are seven stories I derived no idea from, but from the rest I got real good and even tried experiments based on them.

But how do I know what emotions these seven stories may have caused in other brains and hearts?

I trust you will be able to publish your flawless magazine, twice a month.

ANTONIO G. O. GELINEAU,
Burlington, Vt.

[*Here is a letter that pleases the* Editor more, perhaps, than many others that have come in. Here we have at least something constructive *to show* where a *man's imagination* was aroused to such a degree that he went out and did things, which is as it should be. *This is the fulfillment of our* highest hopes, namely, that AMAZING STORIES will fire the imagination to achieve things in this world. In the editorial of the October, 1926, issue, the Editor stated as follows:

"An author, in one of his fantastic scientifiction stories, may start some one thinking along the suggested lines which the author had in mind; whereas the inventor in the end will finish up with something totally different, and perhaps much more important. But the fact remains that *the author provided the stimulus* in the first place, which is a most important function to perform."

This is a healthy sign. We hope to hear more from readers who have thus been stimulated.—EDITOR.]

From a Young Reader

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I am sixteen years old, it is true, but just the same I can't resist praising your magazine. There is something in it which grips the imagination and sends it to regions higher than any to which it could be sent by the ordinary type of fiction. I find it hard to wait a month for the issues; this month I secured a February copy at your offices in Park Place several days before the magazine appeared on the newsstalls. I reiterate, with many of your readers, that AMAZING STORIES should be published twice a month. I would surely purchase it every two weeks; and many of my friends to whom I have recommended it would unhesitatingly do so also.

It may interest you to know that I have met with an allusion to the "Moon Hoax," which may interest you; it is from the *North American Review*, No. 89, October, 1835 (the writer is discussing Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*); "In short, our private opinion is, as we have remarked, that the whole story [i.e., *Sartor Resartus*] . . . has about as much foundation in truth as the late entertaining account of Sir John Herschel's discoveries in the moon."

As to having sequels to such stories as "A Columbus of Space," I *think it* advisable not to have them; first, because sequels are rarely as good as the originals; second, because it would be unwise *to introduce too* great a number of lengthy stories dealing with the same subject.

EDGAR EVIA, New York, N. Y.

[This is a very pleasant letter and our young correspondent, in our opinion, does himself great credit by it. *It is* perfectly true that many sequels have proved great failures and there is so much good material at hand, that it is hardly worth while to suggest special writing of sequels. The citation about Carlyle's "Herr Teufelsdorsch" in this story about the psychological view of clothes; "Sartor Resartus," is quite interesting. The curious thing is that the "Moon Hoax" was firmly believed by thousands.—EDITOR.]

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Discussions—

NATURAL HISTORY IN FICTION

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I wish to tell you that I have read with deep interest your various issues of AMAZING STORIES. I have always been interested in medicine and scientific subjects and your handling of these matters has proved most interesting.

The story of the "Second Deluge" was very well written and its description of the flood and the chaos which it caused in my mind rank with the best literature in its descriptive passages. "The Island of Dr. Moreau," seemed a bit horrible in spots, but of course was entertaining. I really prefer something like the "Red Dust." One can easily close his eyes and imagine himself threading these dusky forests with the people of a thousand years hence. Let us hope that civilization may go forward and not backward.

Some months ago, your article on the attack of the ants on a Brazilian gunboat aroused my curiosity and by consulting encyclopedias, I found every one of your statements correct. I think such articles with a real scientific basis and giving some true facts about natural history or science are a real help in the study of science and should prove good supplementary reading for the high school and college students who too often spend their time in reading trashy books with no real value to them. May AMAZING STORIES continue to grow as it has in the past.

HERBERT H. SMITH,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

[We agree with our correspondent that the natural history features of "Red Dust" and of the giant ant of South America are most interesting and striking. We believe that such stories as the ones cited contain valuable bits of science which can be assimilated and made a part of the equipment as well as if they came out of a dry text-book.—*Editor.*]

THE MOON HOAX "ROTTEN"!

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I have just finished reading, with great interest, the discussions, in your January, 1927 number. It is not with great surprise, therefore, that I find one fault with AMAZING STORIES that I have long noticed in *Science and Invention*. I have read the latter since 1923, and the first named since it's first issue, and believe I am qualified to make this criticism. When you receive a letter praising your magazine, you unqualifiedly agree with it; while when you receive a letter criticizing the publication, you declare that the critic is wrong, but you do not say why. I will not desert the stand that I wish to take, however, and, knowing, from the experience of others that you will not agree with me, I will say, together with Mr. Spurling, of Elgin, Ill," that the "Moon Hoax" was—rotten. All it presented was a string of facts, describing an unusual phenomenon. This, in a Scientifiction magazine. True, it was fiction, in that it was a colossal hoax, but, I believe, in the manner in which Scientifiction is supposed to be interpreted, this is not exactly correct.

I would certainly like to see AMAZING STORIES in semi-monthly form, as this would afford an opportunity for Mr. A. B. Maloir's plan to be put into execution. To me, at least, Jules Verne's stories are not "old stuff," as only two or three of them are obtainable at the library that I use, and in this respect I quite disagree with R. H. Campbell, of Toledo, Ohio.

Yours for bigger and better AMAZING STORIES.

HOWARD BOWMAN,
Los Angeles, Calif.

[We are pleased to print the above, because it gives us an excellent chance to show why, for instance, the "Moon Hoax," while from Mr. Bowman's standpoint it may be rotten, still was good enough to fool hundreds and thousands of people, who actually believed the hoax in question. A bit of psychology enters into all controversies of this kind, because what one man likes the other one will condemn. Very few people ever agree on anything completely. It is, for instance, a simple matter to prove that black is not black at all, but something else. You can take a black inkspot on a sheet of white paper, which most people may call black, but when you hold it against strong sunlight it becomes grey. Consequently black is not black, but grey, and so on *ad infinitum*. Scientifiction, to our mind, is fiction plus science. Both of these requirements, we believe, were represented in a most unusual manner in "The Moon Hoax." We agree with our correspondent that regarded as a story perhaps it is not like the kind that would be written today. It is old-fashioned, as some of Jules Verne's stories are old-fashioned. Nevertheless, they are classics, and so was "The Moon Hoax."—*Editor.*]

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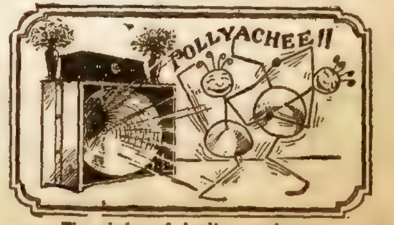

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AN INVISIBLE SPIDER WEB

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I have just read, "The Man Who Could Vanish," in your January issue.

In comment, I can only repeat your own words, "It is the best story of invisibility I have ever read."

As for the possibility of material things becoming invisible, I wish to relate in as few words as possible, a crude instance of the idea.

My sister and I were walking in the Florida woods, one day, when I noticed about ten or twelve feet ahead of us, one of the large banded spiders in its beautiful web, which was stretched between the branches of a small tree; I could distinctly see the web, with its intricate tracery and its zig-zag line of heavier tissue; the spider also was in plain sight, as large as a bumble-bee.

I tried to point it out to my sister, when, to my surprise, the spider, web and all, vanished. I could see the branch where it had been, and went forward to investigate; of course, I walked right into the web, and the spider, quite visible now, *ran down over my face and arm*, and escaped. Perhaps you know, as I afterward learned and saw for myself, that the zig-zag line of web-tissue is a spring, which, on the approach of an enemy, the spider agitates, producing so rapid a vibration of the web that the eye cannot follow it; it becomes invisible just as the spokes of a wheel in rapid motion become invisible, and even transparent to some extent.

There is an absolutely true story of the vanishing of a living creature, house and all; perhaps it may serve as the basis of some future story of invisibility! Help yourselves, authors.

To my mind, the stories of Jules Verne, Wells, Poe and other immortals are in excellent company, when reprinted among "AMAZING STORIES."

F. B. K.
Lancaster, Wisconsin.

WHERE WILL THE FLOODS OF THE "SECOND DELUGE" GO?

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

AMAZING STORIES is a magazine that hits the spot with me as no other fiction magazine has ever done. Although I do not have any too much time to devote to reading I do manage to get through the book before the next issue comes out.

If you make it a semi-monthly I, for one, would welcome A. B. Maloir's suggestion: a complete story in one issue and a bunch of short stories in the next. I think this a very novel idea and would like to see it tried out.

Since reading "The Second Deluge" I have been asking myself repeatedly this question: "Where would a six-mile layer of water on this earth go to when it receded?" Even Cosmo Versal's explanation of it seeping into the earth's crust seems to me rather inadequate. The idea of it evaporating *into space is of course impossible, once* it had gathered upon the earth, because it could get no farther than our atmosphere, which would hold no more than a few inches at the most. About 25 per cent of the earth's surface is land and quite a little of that is solid rock. I doubt if even six miles of hydraulic pressure could force much water into them.

Of course the enormous pressure of the increased depth over the old ocean beds would exert an upheaving influence to the higher ground and perhaps pop out a few mountain peaks. It seems to me there would never again be much more than 8 or 10 per cent of dry land for millions of years.

"The Man Who Could Vanish," was very good but the theory seemed rather vague. Somewhere, several years ago (I think it must have been in the *Electrical Experimenter*) I read a story in which Invisibility was an issue. The principle there was mirrors and prisms reflecting and refracting the light *around* the object.

On the whole I enjoy every one of the stories even though there may be some little technicality occasionally, which is too much for me to grasp at once.

WESLEY A. KAUDER,
Jamestown, N. D.

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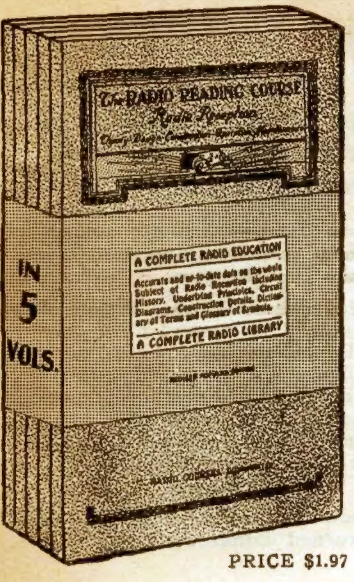
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[As to the problem of the six-mile depth of waters; it is admitted that this much water could not recede into the interior of the earth. However, it is quite possible that this condition could have prevailed, not only on this planet, but on many other like bodies somewhere in the universe. It should always be remembered that, geologically, time, as compared to human epochs, is infinite. It should furthermore be remembered that a great deal of the atmosphere, and, therefore, water in the form of vapor, is lost right along into space. The grazing meteorites are responsible for a good deal of this. Furthermore, at very high points in the atmosphere, the earth continuously loses billions of particles of air every minute. While small, during the course of a year—so small, in fact, that it would be difficult to measure it—in the course of geological time, such losses reach tremendous figures.

The latest geological time scale, based on physics, shows us that the age of mammals—that is, the Miocene and Oligocene periods—can be placed about 16,000,000 years ago. The Mesozoic age of reptiles dates back at least 150,000,000 years. The Paleozoic age of fishes and amphibians dates back at least 300,000,000 years, while the Precambrian dates back at least one billion years. During such time, the losses are, of course, tremendous, and even a sheet of water six miles deep would have vanished entirely out into space long before the passing of such a cycle. Our water supply even now is getting smaller and smaller as time goes on. The moon has lost practically all of it, and so has Mars—both of these bodies being far older than the earth.

The point about invisibility, regarding "The Man Who Could Vanish", is explained in the answer to another letter of one of our correspondents.—*Editor.*]

A SCIENTIFICALLY DISPOSED CRITIC

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

One of your writers, namely A. Hyatt Verrill, certainly does write amazing stories. I am amazed as to why his crab people should develop a semi-human mouth, a big hooked nose, steepled eyes, and big flap ears. Why should people, developed to such an extent in mental telepathy need ears like a hunting dog?

Why should a civilized people, such as those in "Through the Crater's Rim," walk on their hands, and use their feet, when animals such as rats, squirrels, kangaroos, etc., know enough to use the members nearest their head and eyes?

Why should Dr. Unsinn declare that he does not intend to produce invisibility by causing a body to permit light rays passing through it? How in the world can invisibility otherwise be produced? It is true that if the reflected light cannot be seen, the object itself cannot be seen. But what of the light rays intercepted by that body? If the reflected light rays of a building are invisible, does that permit reflected light rays from a building in the next street to pass through the first building unaltered?

S. W. ELLIS,
Woodlaron, Pa.

[Our correspondent asks why Mr. Verrill's crab people should develop a semi-human mouth, a big hooked nose, steepled eyes, and big flapped ears; also why should people developed to such an extent in mental telepathy need ears like a hunting dog. To this we can only answer that if our correspondent has ever visited an aquarium or museum of natural history he will readily see that the shapes and varieties of living beings are endless and most astonishing. Some of the most fearful and amazing creatures which have been fished up or dredged from the depths of the ocean by deep sea expeditions prove this point. There are fish with a good sawlike instrument. Other fish are luminous all over, while still others have luminous eyes, characteristics which have been created by their curious environment. There are so many things in nature that we can not explain that it would be futile to try to ennumerate them all. There are many organs in the human body even, such as, for instance, the appendix, for which there is no good explanation; hairs in the face of the male, which certainly are not needed these days, and many other organs, which remain for no good reason as far as we know.

The same answer might hold true about the people who walk on their hands. It is not at all impossible, though perhaps a little far-fetched, that such creatures could exist.

Regarding the invisibility—we refer to another letter published here, about an invisible spider web; as the correspondent says, truly, the spokes of a wheel can not be seen when the wheel is revolving rapidly. The same is true of the blades of an electric fan, or the propeller of an airplane which certainly are broad and solid. You can see a house or a face right through the blades, and while the object thus viewed may appear a little darker, it is still there with all its characteristics. Now take a stick and wave it too and fro rapidly. It becomes invisible. Is it such a far-fetched idea then, that by means of some apparatus, the human body, or anything, for that matter, may be vibrated at such a rapidity that, although standing stationary, it will be not seen? This is not impossible in latter-day science.—*Editor.*]

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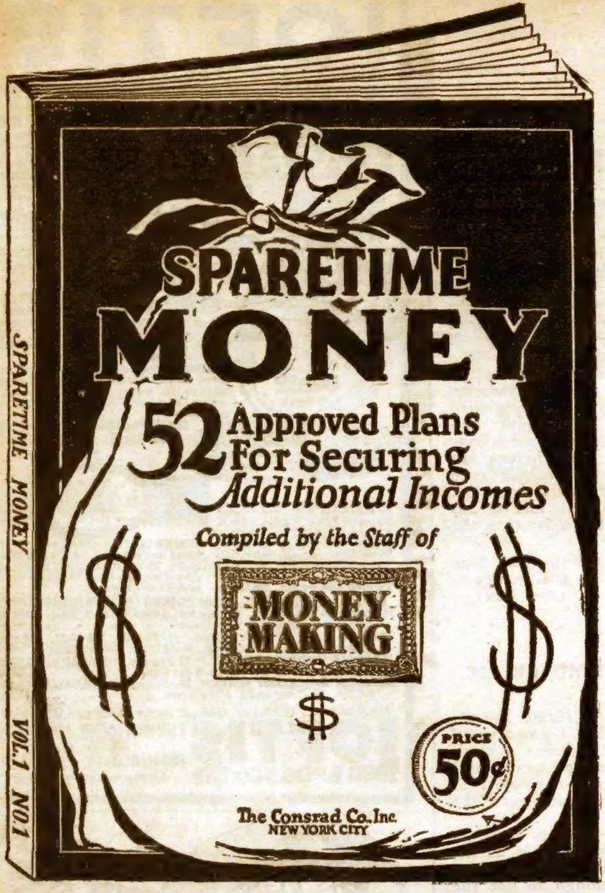
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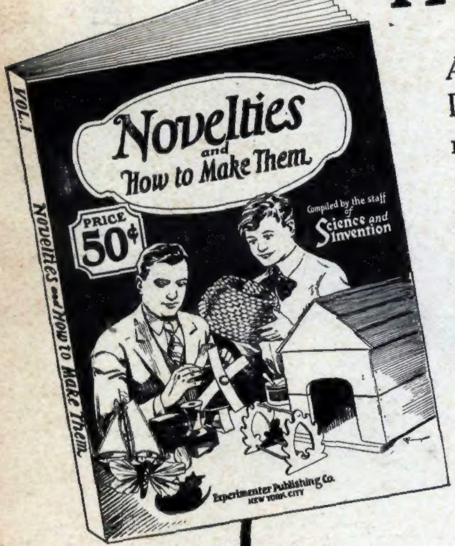
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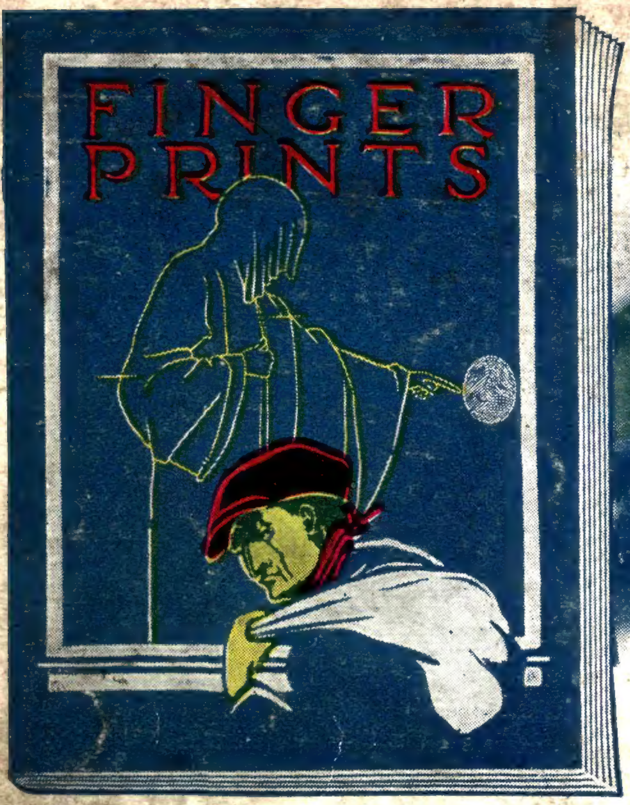

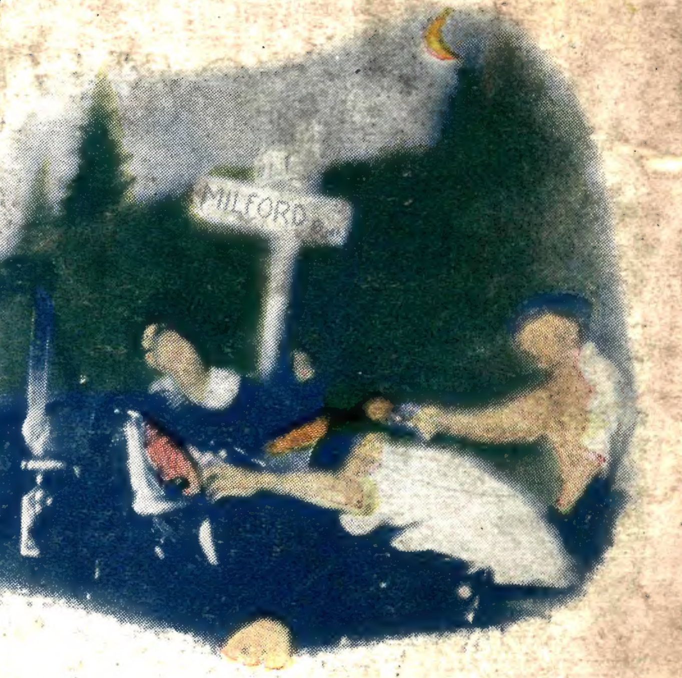

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